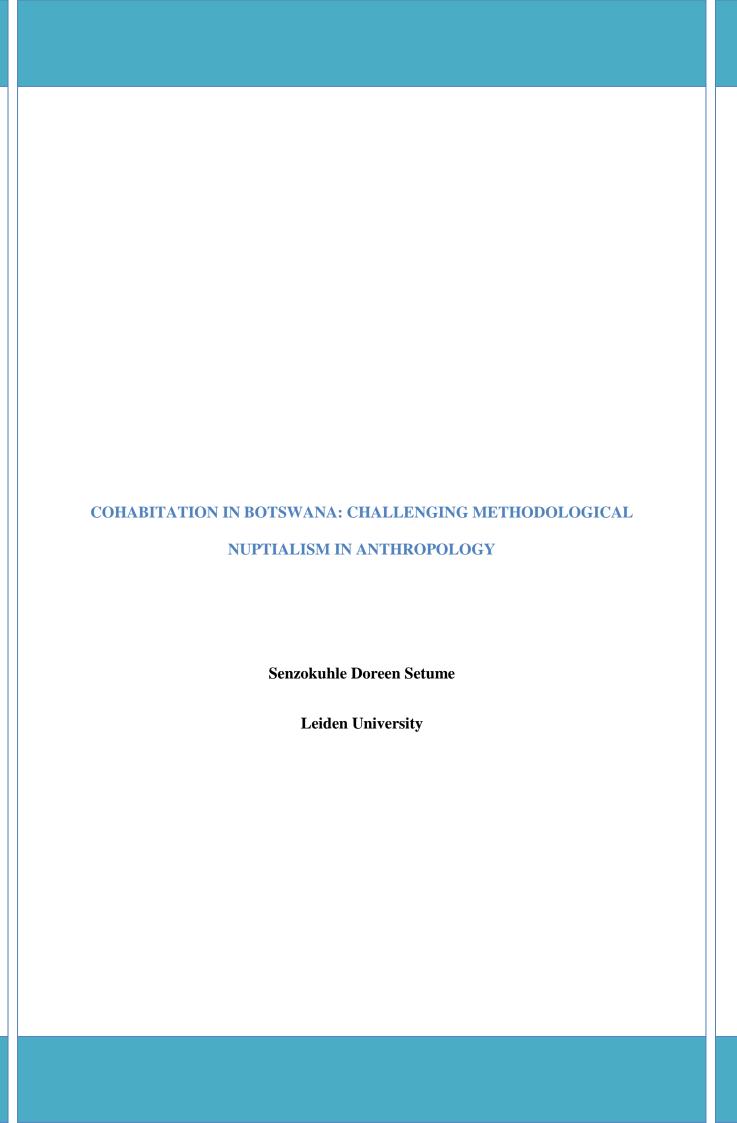Cover Page

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COHABITATION IN BOTSWANA: CHALLENGING METHODOLOGICAL

NUPTIALISM IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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Leiden University

Cohabitation in Botswana: Challenging Methodological Nuptialism in Anthropology

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late twin-sister, Nkosinathi Doris Kengaletswe, 28/03/1972-09/11/2009.

1.1 The emergence of cohabitation as a field of study

The phenomenon of cohabitation seems to have been generating widespread attention, also in the way it has become perceived as an indication of a profound change in marital patterns.Transformations in marriages (Rijk 2017; Pauli & Rijk 2016) and the rise of non-marital relationships have become a worldwide experience (Bumpass & Lu 2000; Parikh 2007; Wu, Penning, Pollard & Hart 2003; Meekers 1993); Botswana has not been spared (Kubanji 2013; Molokomme 1991; Mokomane 2005b; Schapera 1939; Murray 1981; Gulbrandsen 1986). This led to a general concern for the future of family life and that of marriage. How has cohabitation emerged in the midst of religious and cultural contexts that prescribe marriage? What 'force' does cohabitation possess? These are some of the questions that have allowed cohabitation to emerge as a field of study. Despite the observed worldwide reality of cohabiting unions, marriage still assumes the ideal status, while cohabitation is often seen as a deviant relationship. Hence, cohabitation has mostly been conceptualised in the context of marriage.

Conceptualising cohabitation in the context of marriage is what DiMaggio (1997:273) refers to as being part of a particular 'cultural schemata.' The same is described by Swidler (1986) as a 'cultural tool-kit.' By cultural schemata, DiMaggio means a knowledge structure that allows individuals to fill in knowledge gaps when complete information is not available. It directs the search of sources of stability and consistency in our beliefs and representations of what we know (DiMaggio 1997; Swidler 1986) when faced with a new situation. In this case, how does a society make meaning of the rise of cohabitation where marriage is the expected relationship?

The rise of cohabitation has caused some uneasiness in societies (Meekers 1993; Mokomane, 2005b) in which marriage has been held as the ideal relationship. For these societies in general, one can accept that cohabitation is usually viewed in terms of the already existing relationship types, especially marriage. However, the same cannot be assumed of scholarship, where 'bracketing' is expected in the study of a new phenomenon. Bracketing is an approach in the study of a human phenomenon 'that requires deliberate putting aside one's own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation' (Chan, Fung & Chien 2013:1; Carpenter 2007; Biggerstaff & Thompson 2008).

Academia has also maintained this particular perception in the study of cohabitation, contrary to what one can expect of academic 'bracketing'. This is so because academia takes marriage as the starting point (methodological nuptialism) in the study of relations. By methodological nuptialism, I refer to the tendency in scholarship to see marriage as the starting point for understanding cohabitation. Marriage then becomes the ideal from which cohabitation is understood, compared and evaluated. This is despite the reality that, practically, increasing numbers of people are cohabitating rather than getting married, as reflected in the differences between the rates of marriage and rates of cohabitation in different countries.

Methodological nuptialism has resulted in the clouding of cohabitation with negative connotations, e.g. relationships that lack commitment (Wyclick 2007; Stanley, Whitton & Markman 2004) and that have increased domestic violence (Mookodi 2004; Roberts 1977) and unfaithfulness (Treas & Giessen 2000). Despite such negativity, cohabiting rates are on the rise worldwide. It is therefore important to study cohabitation in its own right, since it might stand for a stage in the development of relationships that have no intention of marriage.

Why is it that a relationship that seems to be less favoured is a practical option for the majority?

This study contributes to academic debates on cohabitation by critiquing the ways in which it has been studied. The study further advocates for the study of cohabitation in its own right. From a practical perspective, is it possible for all to get married? Under what circumstances does one cohabit? Moreover, it has been observed that in contemporary society there is a clear separation between marriages and child-bearing; also in cohabiting relations children are being born, meaning that in terms of its reproductive status cohabitation often assumes the same position as marriage (Gulbrandsen 1986; Kubanji 2013). The study of cohabitation is important, since cohabitation has emerged as a 'common practice among all social classes, racial and ethnic groups' (Bumpass & Lu 2000).

1.2 Why study cohabitation in Botswana?

This study was prompted by the fragility of the social position of women and children born in cohabiting unions that I came across in Botswana. Despite couples making a decision to live together as consenting adults, conduct their everyday life jointly, and raise their children together, problems arise when one of the couple dies, especially if the man dies first. In such situations, the surviving partner and children are, in most cases, left to battle for property with parents of the deceased partner. This occurs under the pretence that the couple was not married and therefore the surviving partner cannot inherit intestate (Molokomme 1991). Cohabitation in Botswana has become a social reality that, according to the last three censuses, is on the increase and has surpassed marriage (Kubanji 2013). The rise in cohabitation represents a major shift in social arrangements that need to be studied in order to be understood better in terms of its present-day significance. This study contributes to on-going public debates about the status of cohabitation and to increasing knowledge about cohabitation.

From a social perspective, cohabitation is a practical and available option. In any given society, there are a range of social relationships from friendship, courtship, engagements, prostitution, marriage and cohabitation, etc. Individuals enter into one of these relationships for different reasons. Each relationship therefore serves a particular purpose in the development of human life and as perceived by participants in such relationships. For instance, a relationship like marriage is more than just biological; it also regulates inheritance, provides a sanctioned environment for the right to have sex, and establishes new affinal relations and social positions of individuals (husband, wife and their children). Kuper poignantly captures the importance of marriage when he explains that 'Politically, marriages established, sustained and restructured allegiances' (2016: 267). This study acknowledges cohabitation as one form of existing hetero- and homo-sexual relations. It should be noted that the meaning of cohabitation is as dynamic as the society in which it occurs. In the contemporary situation, when discussing relationships, homosexual relationships cannot be ignored. Indeed, homosexuals can also have cohabiting relationships. However, this study did not come across any homosexual couples, hence they do not form part of the discussions.

Some scholars have studied, recorded and produced insights about the cohabitation phenomenon. The focus is on how the ideology of cohabitation has been created in Botswana: how cohabitation has been perceived by the media, by religious groups and what legal provision is available for cohabitees. This is done in order to explore what can be referred to as the general public view on cohabitation. The chapter also gives an account of the concept of cohabitation by differentiating it from other relationships. It further discusses developments overtime in the study of African marriages to position the dynamic nature of relationships. Finally, the problem statement, objectives, significance, the scope of the study and, subsequently, the outline of the thesis are presented.

1. 3 Interpretations of cohabitation and its significance

1.3.1 Defining the concept of cohabitation

Cohabitation refers to a living arrangement where two people of the opposite sex live together in an intimate relationship and are not married to each other (Mokomane 2005b). The Botswana 2001 Population and Housing census qualified a cohabiting union by explaining that a man or woman may 'live together' like husband and wife (even if they do not stay in the same locality) without having gone through any formal marriage ceremony (Kubanji 2013:7). This type of union is also known as living together. Parker defines cohabitation as a living arrangement in which two people who are not related and not married live together and usually have a sexual relationship (1990:203).

Cohabitation is neither a new phenomenon, nor found in a limited number of societies, but a seemingly pan-human phenomenon across time and found in many societies. There is a common understanding of what cohabitation is in terms of relationships: It has to do with couples living as partners but not being formally married, sharing different resources and engaging in sexual acts. Although no definition of cohabitation commands general acceptance, there is little difficulty in anthropology in identifying and differentiating a cohabiting union from that of marriage. However, once the two are separated, pinning a particular non-marital relationship down as a 'cohabiting' relationship is more complicated and a challenge than the definition initially seems to suggest.

During my fieldwork and from general life experience in Botswana, I have noticed that there are a number of married couples who, for different reasons, do not physically stay together. Some might be working for the government at different duty stations; some at schools both locally and abroad, some husbands work in South Africa while their wives live in the village, some reside at cattle posts or on agricultural lands, while their wives stay at the lands or at the village with children. At times, the whole family is scattered: it is not

uncommon to find families in Botswana where school-going children are in the village, mothers are at the lands and fathers are at cattle posts. This raises the issue of whether geographical separation nullifies or questions the status of such unions as marriage. Likewise, defining and demarcating a union as cohabitation demands some degree of consideration. Definitions of cohabitation have to consider the geographical, social/moral dynamics, and socio-regulatory and ritual dimensions.

1. The geographical dimension: I found that despite the geographical distances, couples had constant contacts: they had children together, met during month end and public holidays, and visited each other as and when an opportunity availed itself. Are such couples cohabiting or engaged in a long distance relationship? How do I classify such unions? Exclude or include such in my sample? I decided to limit my sampling by geographical area and this has excluded a lot of couples from my sample.

2. Social/moral consideration: The other difficulty that I encountered was that of the morality attached to the term 'cohabitation'. In general use by the community, the term cohabitation denotes something negative hence morally wrong. Though some couples were not married but did stay together, they did not want to define their relationship as cohabiting. They would rather emphasise the reasons they were staying together before marriage. They would further explain that the current status is temporary; once the current obstacles are overcome they would marry. I came across one interesting couple: the man is a teacher at one of the local secondary schools. He refuses to see his union as that of cohabitation, he argues that 'I wouldn't say we are cohabiting, my partner came to stay with me after she lost her job, therefore could no longer afford maintaining herself. Once she gets her job back she will again find her own place.' However, this couple had been staying together for over six months. This is an educated gentleman, who, during one of my focus group discussions, spoke

strongly against cohabitation. His rejection of cohabitation is due to the morality that the society attaches to cohabitation, the view that this is a deviant behaviour.

3. Socio-regulatory and ritual considerations: Marriage in Botswana is usually a process that can take many years. The process involves a number of rituals performed along the continuum to mark the different stages (Schapera 1939; Comaroff & Comaroff 1989, Gulbrandsen 1986; Shropshire 1946). These include *patlo*,[1] the paying of *bogadi (bride wealth)* and also the taking of the bride to join the family of her husband. The most significant ritual in the whole process is that of *patlo*. As we will see in Chapter 5, in some types of cohabitation, though parents would have met, the ritual of *patlo* would have not taken place. This means that such a union cannot be equated to marriage. For this study, I ensured that the couples who were part of the sample were those that had not been through the ritual of *patlo*. This is because where such a ritual has taken place, it would also mean that, customarily, a marriage would have taken place.

Despite the difficulty of pinning down a relationship as cohabitation, I nonetheless had to come up with criteria for selecting particular couples for my study. I decided to settle for those couples that were geographically staying together in their own homestead for over six months, i.e. not staying with their parents. This suggested that the relationship is perceived by the participants as permanent. The most important criterion for the selection of my informants was that no *patlo* had taken place, in order to differentiate cohabitation from marriage.

1.3.2 Cross-cultural and global comparisons

The changing trends in the rise of cohabitation and decline in marriage has been a worldwide observation. Many researchers have observed that while marriage rates are on the

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[1] *Patlo* refers to marriage negotiations/seeking a woman's hand in marriage, (Ellece 2010). A cultural practice in which the families of a prospective couple agree to the marriage (Mokomane, 2005b)

decline (Bumpass 1988; Bumpass & Lu 2000; Wu & Pollard 2000; Mokomane 2005) cohabitation is on the rise (Bumpass & Lu 2000; Rhoades, Stanley & Markmann 2009).

Many factors have been ascribed as to why couples cohabit. Some couples cohabit in order to test their relationship before marriage (Axin & Thornton 1992; Rhoades, Stanley, Markmann 2009), others give economic reasons like poverty (Mokomane 2005a), desire for cost/resource sharing (Rhoades, Stanley & Markmann 2009; Manning & Smock 1995), pregnancy and child-bearing, (Pamela & Smock 2002). A number of these academic works have gone further and analyse the kind of people who are attracted to cohabitation rather than marriage. For example, Wu, Penning, Pollard and Hart (2003) argue that:

> Cohabitation is particularly selective of those with non-traditional, more liberal and less religious values, and less committed to the relationship itself and the institution of marriage (Wu, Penning, Pollard and Hart 2003:815).

These authors link the rise of cohabitation to modernity; being in a cohabiting relationship is seen as being modern, while marriage is seen as traditional. The same views are expressed by other scholars (DeMaris & MacDonald 1993; Thompson & Collela 1992; Wu 1999; Axin & Thornton 1992; Popenoe 2009). Some scholars have observed that not all cohabiting unions eventually lead to marriage (Wu, Penning, Pollard and Hart 2003) and, in particular, not all cohabitees intend to turn their union into marriage (Bennett & Blanc 1988; Rhoades, Stanley, Markmann 2009). High rates of divorce have also been associated with the rise in cohabitation. Wu (et al.) observe that:

> although more cohabitations lead to marriage than separation, marital unions that began with cohabitation have a greater risk of instability than those that did not (Wu (et al.) 2003:813).

For instance, regarding the relationship between cohabitation and marriage, Popenoe (2009) posits that cohabitation has negative effects on the relationship itself and the children born within it. He writes:

> One of the low telling measures of lack of commitment is the break up rates of couples. We know from many studies that cohabiting couples break up at a far higher rate than married couples, by one estimate in the USA; the rate is five times higher. Of course much of this is due to the fact that many cohabiting relations are relatively transient and are not expected to be long term. But even when children are involved, a situation one would expect to find higher level of commitment and permanence, the breakup of cohabitating couples is far higher than for married couples. A study in Norway found that children of cohabiting couples were almost two and a half times more likely to face parental break up compared to children of married couples, and that over several decades this discrepancy has not changed […] and three quarters of family break up affect children (Popenoe 2009:433).

As the above literature reflects, cohabitation has been studied in comparison or in relation to marriage. Such studies negatively compare cohabitation to marriage. With an observed increase in cohabiting unions, the initial concern for researchers was 'what does cohabitation mean for the future of marriage?'

Research established that in many societies the general public responded to the rise in cohabitation in three different ways. The first common perception is the view that cohabitation has become an alternative to marriage (Manting 1994; Mokomane 2005a; Popenoe 2009). Manting further explains that when cohabitation is viewed this way, it has negative implications on marriage as it directly leads to a decline in marriage. This is because instead of getting married, couples opt to cohabit.

The second common view is that cohabitation is a last and temporal stage before marriage (Manting 1994; Smock 2000; Carmichael 1995). When people take this as an option it generally causes delay in marriages.

The third view of cohabitation concludes that cohabitation is an alternative to being single (Rindfuss & VandenHeuvel 1990). Smock describes this view as an extension of the dating and sexual relationship and its ideology does not include permanency (Smock 2000:8; Prinz 1995:78). This has a direct negative impact on marriage as it leads to the decline in marriage: couples cohabit instead of getting married. Parker (1990) comes up with a somewhat different but similar meaning for cohabitation in relation to marriage: A part-time relationship in which partners 'drift' into living together with no long-term commitment; a pre-marital relationship that he views as a stage between dating and marriage, and, finally, a substitute for marriage. In this type of relationship, there is definitely a long-term commitment from the couple, but without a legal marriage. Substituting cohabitation for marriage happens especially in a situation in which one of the partners is still legally married to another person or both partners have been through a divorce and are afraid of the legal and emotional implications of a divorce.

This leads me to conclude that studies on (sexual) unions seem to have adopted what I refer to as a *methodological nuptialism*, where marriage is held as the starting point in the discussion of any adult sexual union. How is a view that cohabitation is a prelude to marriage held while statistical evidence consistently indicates that cohabitation is on the increase and, in many cases, will never lead to marriage? This work argues that the societal/academic pre-occupation with the institution of marriage blinds the understanding of cohabitation as a rising alternative that may be independent to marriage: an alternative that I compare to single-parenthood, which has now become an accepted social reality.

1.4 The study of cohabitation in Botswana: The specific case

The tendency to cohabit has been increasing, as has been noted since 1991, when the first census in Botswana captured the 'living together category'. The last three censuses demonstrate a change in nuptiality in Botswana. While marriage rates decrease, cohabitation is on the increase. Table 1 shows the marital trends in Botswana over the past five censuses.

Table 1: Marriage Trends over the Past Five Censuses, by Gender

Marital Status	1971		1981		1991		2001		2011	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Never Married	44.0	37.0	51.7	44.5	54.8	49.5	51.7	46.5	**58.1**	**53.4**
Married	47.1	42.9	44.4	41.5	29.0	27.2	17.1	17.9	**18.8**	**17.9**
Living Together	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.2	12.0	16.8	17.1	**20.6**	**20.8**
Separated/Divorced	5.0	6.6	2.1	3.3	1.7	2.0	1.2	1.8	**1.1**	**1.7**
Widowed	2.1	11.9	1.8	11.0	1.5	8.5	1.3	6.5	**1.3**	**6.2**

Source: Statistics, Botswana (Kubanji 2013:222).

Table 1 shows changing trends in marital status in Botswana between 1971 and 2011. In 1971, 44% and 37% men and women had never been married; for the same categories in 2011, 58.1% men and 53.4% women had never been married. In 1971, 47.1% and 42.9% of men and women, respectively, were married. In 2011, the figure had dropped dramatically to 18.8% and 17.9% for men and women, respectively. This shows that less and less people are getting married. The national census first captured cohabiting unions in 1991 and recorded that 12.2% of men and 12% of women were in cohabitation. This figure increased to 20.6% for men and 20.8% for women by 2011. This therefore indicates an increase in the percentages of people who are cohabiting.

It is evident that in Botswana today, marriage is on the decline and cohabitation is on the increase. Consistent with observations made elsewhere (Bumpass 1988; Bumpass & Lu 2000; Wu & Pollard 2000; Rhoades, Stanley & Markmann), the idea that marriage is the basis for family formation in Botswana is challenged. Two articles by Mokomane in particular address cohabitation in Botswana: 'Formation of Cohabiting Unions in Botswana:

A Qualitative Study' (2005b) and 'Cohabitation in Botswana: An alternative or prelude to Marriage? (2005a)'. These studies aim to understand what cohabitation means for Botswana. With regard to the aforementioned three views – cohabitation as an alternative to marriage (Manting 1994; Mokomane 2005a); cohabitation as a last and temporal stage before marriage (Manting 1994; Smock 2000; Carmichael 1995); and cohabitation as an alternative to being single (Rindfuss & Vanden Heuvel 1990) – Mokomane concludes that, currently, cohabitation is often a prelude to marriage in Botswana. She holds the view that cohabitation is neither a threat to, nor does it lead to a decline in marriage. She explains that, rather, cohabitation delays marriage, since none of the cohabitees has given up on getting married. This work challenges this standpoint, questioning the extent to which this view can be held as reality in Botswana while evidence shows that marriage rates are declining and cohabitation rates are on the increase. The latest census in Botswana shows a correlation between increased rates of cohabitation and decreased rates in marriage. This is accompanied by an increase in the number of people who never get married. My concerns here are twofold:

- The first concern in relation to these figures is how to understand cohabitation as a form of relationship that has come to exist alongside marriage and other forms of relationships as a singular entity, as a form that needs to be acknowledged, studied and understood in its own right.

- The second concern is that until cohabitation is acknowledged as a social reality, 'bracketing' all moral perceptions of the phenomenon, there will be no policies in place to protect people (especially women and children) in these relationships with respect to property and inheritance when the relationship terminates or one of the couple dies. Even prior to Mokomane's work, legal practitioners in Botswana were raising concerns about the welfare of cohabiting women and children born

within these unions, specifically that cohabitees are not legally protected (Lesetedi & Ngcongco 1995).

Relating to the first concern, Mokomane (2005a) describes factors that lie behind the decision to cohabit, i.e. why cohabitees move in together. She observes that, usually, the birth of a child and the time spent together leads the couple to cohabit. This is consistent with the findings of this study in which all cohabiting couples have already had a child. She also notes that, in some cases, there has been little reasoning and thinking by cohabitees about the decision to stay together, it 'just happens'. The question is, if it 'just happens', how come so many Batswana do it? Perhaps cohabitation has become a conscious decision made by some Batswana. Can cohabitation 'just happen and be a conscious decision at the same time?' Mokomane explains that some people cohabit because

> […] of the transformations in the customary marriage procedures, in particular the monetary value that has been placed on the formerly symbolic gestures of customary marriage has significantly increased the costs of getting married. In particular, the inflated and stringent demands placed on contemporary bride wealth and traditional marriage gifts means that many unemployed and lowly paid young man and have difficulty in raising bride wealth and meeting the costs associated with getting married (Mokomane 2005b:210).

Mokomane (2005a, 2005b) discusses some of the factors that lead to cohabitation in Botswana. She concludes that cohabitees are committed and have a desire to marry but are challenged by the high costs of marriage. Couples that cohabit are generally the poor who cannot afford the costs associated with getting married.

However, as this study discusses in Chapter 6, the costs associated with marriage, specifically *bogadi* are very minimal. *Bogadi* refers to gifts (cattle, goats, money) that the

family of the bride demands from the family of the groom in the process of marriage negotiations between two families (Shropshire 1946). That is, formal conditions for getting married alone, such as the payment of the *bogadi*, in reality cannot explain why people enter cohabitation, since the bride wealth as such is not an obstacle. Hence, there must be other factors than the purely materialist ones that need to be examined to explain the rise of the phenomenon. Such factors include the need for social recognition (Honneth 1995; Mattias 2013; Bush & Zurn 2010) of the union by parents and the fact that the younger generation is dependent (Fine & Glendenning 2005; Fraser & Gordon 1994) on the older generation. For instance, in Molepolole, *bogadi* has been standardised to eight cattle, which may well be less than the cost of a wedding tent or even a wedding cake. Therefore, the material desires have created other demands to be met when a marriage takes place. According to Van Dijk, one cow for *bogadi* costs P[2]1200, while a wedding cake alone costs up to P6000 (2012:145).

It is the commercialisation of other 'tastes' that has, over time, made the costs associated with getting married exorbitant. The rising costs of getting married have been observed in most countries in Southern Africa: Namibia (Pauli & Dawids 2017; Pauli 2011); Botswana (Rijk 2017, 2010); South Africa (James 2017). For instance, Pauli and Dawids comment on how weddings have become expensive in Namibia, indicating that 'Namibian weddings have become lavish and expensive…New and innovative status markers are constantly added to ever more lavish wedding rituals, such as expensive types of decoration, food or clothing' (2017:15). This resulted in less people getting married overtime and in a rise of non-marital relationships.

In her work, Mokomane glosses over vital information about cohabitation in Botswana. She overlooks, for example, the significance and importance of what she calls '*kadimo* practice' *Kadimo* is a practice in which, under certain circumstances a woman can be

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[2] P (Pula) is a currency unit for Botswana. one Euro is equivalent to P12.00

'borrowed' and go to live with her partner prior to the marriage. She asserts that 'through the *kadimo* practice families can also facilitate cohabitation' (2005b:208). This implies that the practice of *kadimo* accelerates or increases cohabitation. However, she seems to have missed the fact that, in essence, *kadimo* is cohabitation, since no *patlo* takes place in the process of establishing a *kadimo* union. This is a type of cohabitation that is sanctioned[3] by the parents and therefore, to a certain extent, condoned. This implies that there might be some other form of 'cohabitation' that parents are not involved in (this is the subject matter of this thesis, discussed in Chapter 5) and contributes to the assumption that parents are completely excluded, alienated and not involved in the decisions of their adult sons and daughters to cohabit. Such an approach ignores the role played by parents in the establishment of some cohabiting unions and creates the mistaken picture that, in Botswana, cohabitation always occurs outside any parental arrangements.

This work argues that, despite the argument that cohabitation in Botswana occurs mainly for economic reasons, cohabitation is not an end in itself, but rather a prelude to marriage (Mokomane 2005b). In reality, more people of a marriageable age live outside the union of marriage. While literature elsewhere attributes affluence as contributing to the decision to cohabit (Manting 1994; DeMaris & MacDonald 1987), previous studies in Botswana point to the fact that people cohabit due to a lack of resources (Mokomane 2005b). The findings of this work challenge this theory. This work shows that couples are aware that they can marry without the giving of *bogadi* first. Some are aware that they can get married without parental consent, in cases when such consent is difficult to obtain. Despite this awareness, my research suggests that couples still do not want to marry either without *bogadi* or parental consent. Thus, it is too simple to just point at the material conditions as an explanation for cohabitation; many other factors play a role. This work establishes that

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[3] This does not mean that parents support cohabitation, rather it is a 'negative' alternative when marriage is not immediately possible but a child has been born

cohabitation should be conceived of as a form of relationship in itself, evidenced by the fact that, in some cases, parents may still become involved in the arrangements that the community may be involved, that recognition can occur and that inheritance matters can still be settled.

Finally, some scholars have related the rise of non-marital unions, including cohabitation, with the loss of parents' authority over the lives of their adult children, mainly due to labour migration, the influence of Western education and growing urbanisation (Gulbrandsen 1986; Brown 1983; Schapera 1939; Mair 1969). All these factors, it has been pointed out, have enabled the younger generation to be economically independent of their parents. I would suggest that, on the contrary, in some cases, parents remain central to the practice of cohabitation[4] and, as will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, they play a big role in establishing some cohabitating unions. But what perceptions do Batswana have about cohabitation?

1.5 Societal debates on cohabitation in Botswana

1.5.1 Moral/public debates

There are multiple sources of moral ideology concerning cohabitation in Botswana: religious, cultural, judicial, and generational. The media often portray different ideologies simultaneously. For example, its reporting of the normative religio-cultural stand concerning non-marital relationships and the current lack of legal provisions for cohabitation depicts a prevailing and dominant ideology of cohabitation in Botswana.

The current debates on cohabitation in Botswana are reflected in a number of newspaper articles (*Mmegi* 2010; *The Voice 2012*; *The Echo* 2013). These articles portray cohabitation as a new and rising phenomenon that is problematic in nature, compromising

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[4] Chapter 5 disaggregates cohabiting unions in relation to the extent, or lack, of parental involvement in the process of establishing cohabiting unions

family life and against the culture and religious traditions of Batswana. Over the past five years or so cohabitation has secured significant space in the media with headlines such as: 'Cohabitation: Lovers' paradise or death trap?' (*Mmegi*, 22 April 2010); 'Desperate times, desperate measures: Chiefs urge Govt to force cohabiting couples to marry' (*The Voice*, 15 June 2012); 'Botswana Chiefs want bride price regulated' (*African Review*, 14 June 2012); 'The Cacophony abode that is Old Naledi: Rising cases of cohabitation worry residents' (*The Echo*, 11 October 2013), 'Cohabitation reflects badly on children' (*Sunday Standard*, January 24-30, 2010); 'Cohabitation worries Dihutso', (*BOPA*, Botswana 18 August, 2008). These articles proclaim cohabitation to be problematic and a new type of relationship without much ethnographic evidence, which can actually shed light on the nature of the phenomenon. These negative valuations of cohabitation seem to lack the critical evidence regarding the reality or of the negative things that they claim cohabitation is responsible for. The question, then, is not only why people appear to voice negative views about cohabitation without foundation, but also why there is no critical interest in trying to substantiate such claims? Is this just 'bad', 'poor' or 'provocative' journalism, or is something deeper at play; namely, ideologically cohabitation *must* be bad, in order to defend other (conservative) values like marriage. The impact of such journalism is far-reaching and fosters perceptions such as the idea that partners in cohabiting unions and their children are not legally protected. For instance, Edward Bule, a reporter for a local newspaper, *Mmegi*, states that:

> Cohabitation is rampant and a cause for great concern here. Usually it is the unemployed girl who moves in with her working boyfriend as a matter of economic necessity because the girl cannot afford to pay rent (*Mmegi*, 22 April 2010).

The use of the word rampant implies that cohabitation is some kind of 'urban disease', caused by expensive rents. In reaction to the increasing rates of cohabitation in Botswana, a project,

Re a Nyalana ('we are marrying') was initiated in order to assist cohabiting couples to legalise their marriage. To a lesser extent, media reporting has sparked a public debate about cohabitation. In an interview with Gbz FM, a local radio station, in October 2013, the project coordinator said that, since its inception, *Re a Nyalana* has helped over 256 couples get married. The project assists couples by organising mass weddings, i.e. a number of couples get married on the same day at a local k*gotla* (court). *Re a Nyalana* was established in 2011 and one of its founders explains that the 'purpose of the mass wedding is to address and curb cohabitation, which has become rampant in Botswana' (*African Review*, June 14, 2012). She further explains that '[…] it is a known fact that for every four women in Botswana, one is married, one lives in a stable cohabiting union while two women live in visiting cohabitation' (*African Review*, June 14, 2012). The aim of the programme is to 'correct' unions that are not marriage, by 'correcting' what has gone wrong in society. In other words, its raison d'être is to stop cohabitation by helping cohabitees get married. The coordinator further explains, 'the initiative targets the elderly people, who have been cohabiting for many years but could not get married due to financial constraints' (BOPA; *Daily News* 12 February 2013). The couples in question can be in their eighties. For instance, Topo Monnakgotla, reporting for the *Daily News* writes: 'Mr. M. Rakala (83) thanked the government for having made it possible for *Re a Nyalana Society* to help legalise their unions' (*Daily News*, 14 June 2013).

Such relationships are not necessarily based on economic factors alone, but social reasons, like the existence of children, some of whom are themselves married and having their own families. Is it right to label a well-established union between a couple aged over 60 years, *cohabitation?* Referring to these elderly couples as cohabiting appears to accuse them of 'immorality', despite having been in a steady relationship for so many years. Why, then, should they accept a public verdict of immorality?

1.5.2 Religious debates

World religions form part of the education curricula in Botswana in order to promote tolerance and empathy among the followers of different religions. Despite the fact that all religious teachings promote marriage, cohabitation occurs among couples across all major religions. This is also reflected in the 2011 census in Botswana, which reported their status as 'living together', see Table 2.

Table 2 : Percentage Distribution of Population by Religion, Marital Status and Sex

Religion	Never married		Married		Living together		Separated/ Divorced		widowed	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Christian	57.8	53.9	20.4	18.5	19.5	19.8	1.0	7.3	1.2	6.1
Muslim	43.6	33.9	38.8	46.7	13.4	11.1	2.5	7.4	1.6	4.4
Bahai	22.9	24.0	46.3	46.7	20.9	21.1	3.9	7.8	5.9	6.1
Hindu	24.4	15.6	71.5	77.6	1.4	1.9	1.3	1.3	1.3	3.7
Badimo	48.4	39.3	16.8	16.2	30.3	31.2	1.7	1.9	2.7	11.4
No Religion	63.6	56.1	11.4	10.0	22.8	27.3	0.9	1.0	1.2	5.5
Rastafarian	60.2	41.5	13.2	41.9	22.3	8.8	3.2	4.9	1.1	2.9
Other Religion	30.7	20.6	57.7	65.4	7.7	4.4	2.4	4.8	1.5	4.7

(Adapted from: Statistics Botswana: Kubanji 2013: 229)

Table 2 shows that, generally, couples who are religious tend to marry rather than cohabit. This result is expected given that most religions encourage and promote marriage and discourage non-marital unions. For instance, on average, 75% of Hindus are married, while only 1.7% are cohabiting; 38.8% of Muslims are married and 13.45% are cohabiting. However, Christian couples reflect an insignificant difference as 20.4% are married compared to 19.5% that are cohabiting. Another interesting observation from this data is that among adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR), those who reported their religion as being *Badimo* (this literally means 'gods', but used in this context it denotes ATR believers), there are more people in cohabiting unions than marriage: 16.8% males and 16.2% females are married, while 30.3% males and 31.2% females are cohabiting. One possible explanation

for this observation is that along with the introduction of civil marriages, Westernisation and other developments mean that cohabitation has become an alternative to traditional marriage. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Judicial debates

During my fieldwork and in personal communications with different individuals, it became clear that, in Botswana, if a couple has been cohabiting for more than six months they are considered married. However, I have been unable to obtain any documentation to support this status from *dikgotla* (customary courts), District Commission offices or the government stationery office. Moreover, my conversations with a number of couples (both cohabiting and not) revealed that they often held incorrect views about the legal status of cohabiting couples. Indeed, when checking their claims with legal experts, their version of the legal provisions could not be confirmed. According to Mokomane, currently there is no legal provision for cohabitees in Botswana:

> Consequently, not only is cohabitation unrecognised as an institution by the two systems of law that operate simultaneously in the country (general and customary law), but neither of the two systems gives cohabitants any legal protection. This is particularly so with regard to inheritance and property rights of cohabiting women as well as the maintenance of children born within these unions (Mokomane 2005b: 21).

There is no law that protects partners and their children in cohabiting unions; therefore, legally 'no length of cohabitation is considered to amount to marriage or give rise to inheritance rights between the partners or their issue' (Griffiths 1997; Dow & Kidd 1994: 32). Both common and customary laws do not allow for cohabitation (SARDC 2005). This major legal loophole needs to be addressed, in particular because recent censuses show that

there are more couples cohabiting in Botswana than those who are married. The situation for women in a cohabiting union and their children is further complicated by the fact that 'a child born to an unmarried mother 'belongs' to its mother's family group' (Molokomme 1991 This implies that it might be a challenge for such a child to inherit from a father who is not married to its mother. Certainly, unless there is a paradigm shift in the way cohabitation is viewed, as the country has just ended the end of Vision 2016 and has entered Vision 2036 approaches-tolerance – one of the pillars of the two visions – will remain beyond the reach of cohabitees. From a human rights' perspective, cohabitation should receive some form of recognition under the rule of law, in a similar way that marriage has. There is, therefore, a need for policies that reflect the current reality of relationships in Botswana.

Currently, government policies advocate for marriage and are concerned with 'the decline in the value of marriage in Botswana' (Kubanji 2013: 224). The goal of the Revised National Population Policy is to 'promote the institution of marriage and strengthen the role of the family in providing protection and security' (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning 2010). This indicates that, to date, there has been no effort on the part of the government to address cohabitation at a policy level. The non-governmental organization (NGO), Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) (1997) 'indicated that the absence of legal and social recognition of cohabitation leads to disputes relating to child welfare, property ownership at dissolution.' The possibility of any law to protect individuals in cohabiting unions is primarily a policy issue. I concur with the view that there is a need for progressive politics and a need to challenge the status quo in relation to cohabitation. This is in contrast to the prevailing politics that perceives marriage as the proper state of being as it is informed by rather conservative moralities often of a religious nature. As long as cohabitation is viewed as a prelude to marriage, unruly behaviour by the youth or just an issue of poverty there will not be any laws formulated to protect cohabitees.

1.6 Explaining the rise of cohabitation: Socio-economic and historical processes

1.6.1 Changing economic conditions in Southern Africa

The cultural, social, and religious environment prevailing in Southern Africa has always promoted marriage as the ideal type of relationship (Schapera 1939; Matthews 1940; Kuper 1982; Mookodi 2004). On a similar note, Hosegood, McGrath and Moutrice (2009), working on cohabitation in Kwa-Zulu natal, South Africa, observe that 'taken in their entirety, contemporary tribal leaders, religious and legislative structures and processes are favorable towards marriage and seek to promote it as the preferred family institution' (2009: 280). However, changes largely effected by 'Western impact', such as migration, urbanisation and the introduction of a monetary economy (Gulbrandsen 1986; Schapera 1939) also affected the institution of marriage. Such economic changes were exacerbated by the 'major structural changes within the colonial Tswana' (Cockerton 2002: 38) that have taken place since the 1930s. These changes include, among others: male labour migration, ecological disasters, and World War II (*Ibid*.). These developments have made subsistence agriculture decline in importance. This, in turn, affected economic status and, in particular, single women found themselves 'more economically insecure and socially dislocated,' since the patriarchal structure that supported unmarried women was crumbling. Gulbrandsen (1986) observed among the Bangwaketse, an ethnic group in Botswana, that marriage is on the decline because the younger generation is finding alternative ways to establish themselves and gain social recognition outside marriage. He notes that:

> […] while a young man's ambitions were customarily directed towards acquiring rank in the hierarchically organised politico-jural forum of the *kgotla*, where marriage was a basic condition for participation and where ownership of cattle was significant, the

young men of today achieve esteem mainly through immediate and conspicuous consumption […] in other words, there has been a dramatic transformations in idioms of rank, resulting in marriage not only becoming irrelevant but even 'just causing trouble' in the young man's achievements. Marriage means a young man might be hampered by a wife who 'makes a noise' when he comes home, and who may bring a case against him of poor maintenance (Gulbrandsen 1986: 15).

Gulbrandsen clearly demonstrates how marriage is becoming less appealing for the younger generation. Marriage, farming, and livestock-rearing are no longer social indicators for success.

Overtime a gradual move from an agricultural economy to a money economy was inevitable. This development is well captured by Cockerton, when he states that, while prior to 1920 female migrants were mostly married women accompanied by their husbands, post-1920s female migration is 'characterised by rising volumes of independent migrants with predominately economic motives and step patterns to urban destinations (especially Witwatersrand) of which two thirds were the never married […]' (Cockerton 2002: 38). The need for money rather than subsisting from an agricultural economy inevitably affected family life and this is indicated by a drop in marital unions and child birth (Gaisie 1995). Gaisie further notes that economic changes led to the transformation of the close-knit cooperative socio-economic unit into an economically less self-sufficient one (*Ibid*.: 37). This further weakened the traditional family structure in which marriage was ideal and nearly universal (Schapera 1939; Kuper 1982, 1970; Matthews 1940) as married migrants left behind their wives and single women gained independence from male domination and the prescription of marriage

All these changes gradually transformed the traditional nuptiality patterns into different types of sexual unions and relationships (*Ibid*.: 38) as marriages were delayed. Schapera (1933) notes that 'despite the delayed marriages, courting relationships and love affairs flourished and this led to the rise in pre-marital births and female headed households' (see also Gulbrandsen 1986). For instance, the rise in childbirth outside marriage was observed in the 1991 census, which revealed that 'childbearing among six out of ten females occurred outside wedlock' (Gaisie 2002: 38; see also Schapera 1939; Kubanji 2013).

Another factor that has contributed to economic changes and changes in nuptiality was the introduction of formal education. Contact with Western socio-economic structures and education increased the independence of children from the authority and social control of their parents and eventually created a social environment in which the youth selected their partners themselves (Kossoudji & Muller 1983: 834; Schapera 1939; Mafela 1997). The introduction of formal education delayed marriages, gave the younger generation freedom from parental authority, but did not delay sexual relations (Schapera 1939). Thus, changes in nuptiality (Bledsoe & Pison 1994; Lesthaeghe, Kaufmann, 1989).) were observed as more children were born out of wedlock, childbearing outside marriage became less stigmatised, and there was a rise in the number of female-headed households as well as a rise in cohabitation (Kossoudji & Muller 1983; Kubanji 2013; Lockwood 1995). All these changes eroded strictures against extra-marital sex and childbearing (Schapera 1939). The contact with European ideas, accompanied by the near disappearance of polygamy resulted in a pronounced rise in concubinage (Kossoudji & Muller 1983: 834) cohabitation and other non-marital unions.

One of the main causes of the decline in the importance of marriage in Southern Africa has been the gradual shift from communal life to a capitalist society that rendered communal

labour irrelevant (Mair 1969; Schapera 1939). With the arrival of the Europeans and the cash economy came a change in the means of production. Mair points out that:

> certain effects follow whenever a money economy is substituted for substance economy […] the close interdependence of the members of the family breaks up when any member has the opportunity of meeting his own needs by producing something for the world (Mair 1969: 19).

During this period, people needed to pay tax, which could mainly be paid in cash (Schapera 1939). The need for cash was also accompanied by a desire to own the newly introduced goods from Europe. Such goods included the plough, salt, soap, matches, candles, arms and ammunition, European clothing, school fees, bibles and there was also a new obligation to pay church dues (Mair 1969: 20). These goods, previously obtained through a system of barter, were now commodities that could be could bought for money. As will be discussed in the next section (1.6.2), this new desire for goods contributed to labour migration (Mair 1969; Schapera 1939).

Mair further explains that, inevitably, two lines of development took place. First, the 'mutual dependence which formerly was a strong sanction for the performance of mutual obligation declined. Second, the needs of the group as are met by the cash purchases must be met form the earnings of those members of the group who are capable of earning wages' (Mair 1969:19). This meant that the large household and extended family units were no longer a source of wealth, and instead a burden that only the rich could bear. On this note, Mair observes that a man who is rich in terms of money may well prefer to spend his wealth on things other than marriage payments (Mair 1969). This development meant that both the type of marriage and family changed rapidly from a polygamous and extended-family system to monogamous and nuclear family relations, respectively, with relatively fewer children.

Over time, the universal interest in marriage and the need for a large family waned. As young people engaged in the paid economy and went to formal schools, they delayed marriage. However, as previously mentioned, they did not delay sexual activity and increasing numbers of children were born before marriage.

1.6.2 The impact of labour migration

The impact of labour migration on nuptiality demands special attention as it contributed to profound changes in nuptiality patterns in Southern Africa and Botswana in particular (Schapera 1939; Maloka 1997; Gaisie 1995; Dintwa 2010). The discovery of gold in South Africa was a watershed in the social and economic history of Southern Africa (Maloka 1997: 213). The availability of a cheap and exploitable labour force within the region lies behind the success of the gold mines (*Ibid*.). Sharp et al. explain that migration is 'largely caused by deprivation, since the decision to migrate is propelled by the desire to escape from an environment which is no longer felt to guarantee survival' (1991: 2).

Labour migration had unprecedented consequences on marriage and family life in general. People who migrate need a higher degree of flexibility than those who do not (Williamson 1988: 430) and in the context of Southern Africa, young men had such flexibility, in contrast to women and the elderly. Labour migration took the husband away from home for prolonged periods, leaving women and children by themselves. The extended family remained important, taking care of and providing a context for these temporarily abandoned women. Over time, however, there has been a loss of the significance of the extended family and kinship networks, certainly in the case of Botswana. This created changes in nuptiality patterns. As more and more men were away for extended periods of time, women delayed getting married (Schapera 1939) and there was a rise in concubinage (Kossoudji & Muller 1983: 834). These developments led to changes in the position and role of women in society.

1.7 Changing position of women in society and female-headed households in Botswana

The above-mentioned changes have inevitably resulted in changes in the position of women in society. Women began to participate in the money economy and formal education and more women began heading their households.

How can we interpret these other relationships, which exist in parallel to marriage? Studies on the rise of female-headed households (Mookodi, 2005) in Botswana may support the argument that cohabitation needs to and can be studied objectively on its own. Developments in family life indicate that there has been a clear disconnection between marriage and social structure. The rise of female-headed households does not mean that the institution of marriage is falling apart; rather, it points to the development of family life in a different direction, as female-headed households also regulate sexuality and reproduction. Therefore, other relationships, like female-headed households and cohabitation should be considered alongside marriage as specific relational forms in the basic structure of society.

As discussed above, the pattern of relationships in society has been changing due to external influences. One major force of change has been economic in nature. With the advent of colonial rule in Botswana (Mgadla 1998), there was a need for cash to pay taxes and to purchase goods that were not produced locally, like guns. Schapera (1947) describes in detail why the *Kgatla (Bakgatla)* wanted to engage in paid labour. In the early 1900s, the mining industry in South Africa was booming and needed labour to sustain the demand. There was insufficient local manpower, so there was a need to recruit from neighbouring countries and Botswana also supplied labour to the mines in South Africa. This outmigration of able-bodied men not only had positive economic gains, but affected family life and changed the structure of the family. The rise of female-headed households is one effect of labour migration

(Schapera 1939). The rise of female-headed households in Botswana (then, Bechuanaland Protectorate) in the 1960s, was a result of the prevailing economic processes. Schapera (ibid) further notes that some men could be absent from their villages for years on end. These long absences for economic reasons had a number of consequences: infidelity was not uncommon as the wives and fiancées who stayed behind could not always wait for the return of their men. These wives and fiancées often had children with their lovers. The prolonged absence of men also meant that there was a surplus of women, who then accepted the advances of any available men, including those who were married man, but who could not marry them since polygamy had been abolished. On this note, however, Townsend (1997) cautions that it is not always the case that the absence of a man in a household necessarily mean a lack of resources. Townsend carried out a study in Botswana in which he investigated links between residential groups and non-co-resident individuals. Unlike most studies, which start by looking at women, he examined the life histories of men. Townsend concluded in his study that the residential household is an inadequate and misleading unit of analysis in any discussion about the role of men in family life. This study implies that scrutiny of female-headed households might reveal that men do participate in these households, for instance, as brothers. Townsend further points out that divorce and abandonment was far less common than otherwise assumed. Women had children with men but did not marry them or live with them, so-called concubinage or *bonyatsi*. Spiegel (1990) uses the term *bonyatsi* when discussing extra-marital relationships in Lesotho. The term has connotations of marital infidelity. He further explained, for instance, that men also established longer-term *bonyatsi* relationships with women other than their wives in or near their own home villages. In many instances, these women were themselves the wives of migrant men who were likely absent for the duration of the relationship.

Broken engagements, divorce and spousal desertion were common as some men never returned home and women were left to look after the household by themselves. Thus, the central role historically played by marriage has been challenged by the rise of female-headed households. Why are these female-headed households worthy of a researcher's attention in the context of a study on cohabitation? Botswana is a patriarchal society where, for a long time, women have been under the authority of men in the form of a father, brother, uncle or husband. On this note, Schapera has observed that 'family life in the olden days was organized in a pattern in which the husband and father had unquestioned authority over his wives and children' (1947:118). Therefore, the absence of these men meant that the size and especially the composition (socially and authoritatively) of the household changed. It is important to note, however, that the absence of husbands did not automatically mean that women were able to move out of the structure of the patriclan (as the father or the brother could still hold authority over them) and settle elsewhere independently or with a new partner. This was because a woman divorcing, or 'returning' as it is called, would disturb bride wealth arrangements. Female-headed households, however, are not viewed as 'returning' and so do not impact such arrangements.

Van Driel (1994) concluded in her studies on female-headed households that:

Currently about half of the households in rural Botswana are headed by unmarried, widowed, divorced or separated women. The large number of female heads of households and unmarried mothers contrasts sharply with the situation in the former times when headship of households was restricted to men and unmarried motherhood was highly tabooed and heavily sanctioned (Van Driel 1994: 216).

This apparent change in the formation of households in Botswana has attracted a great deal of research and writing (Schapera 1947; Izzard 1985; Datta & Mcllwaine 2000; Kossoudji & Mueller 1983; Van Driel 1994), indicating that over time and with a decrease in labour migration other factors than the absence of men began playing a role in the rise of female-headed families.

Echoing the factors raised by Schapera, Izzard (1985) observes that in Botswana there is a rise in the 'never married' category, as there are now more people of marriageable age who remain single than was the case at the time of Schapera's research. There are several factors that contribute to this scenario other than the economy-based problem of absent men. While Botswana has a distorted sex ratio, i.e. more women than men, at the same time, men tend to marry late and when they do marry, they marry younger women (Mokomane 2008; Bongaarts 2007). Izzard (1985) and Gulbrandsen (1986) observed that a single woman over the age of forty has reduced chances of getting married. Some women in this category decide to build and head their own households. In addition, there has been a general decline in marriage rates resulting from the gradual removal of stigma attached to pre-marital childbirth and to non-marriage (Gulbrandsen 1986). This decline in marriage can also be attributed to a change in attitude by many in society towards pre-marital birth and failure to marry. There is less moral pressure on the view that 'everyone must marry' and that childbirth must be within marriage (Schapera 1939). Furthermore, changing provisions in the Botswana Marriage Law have also improved the status of women. Women can now, independently of men, acquire land and property (see the Botswana Abolition of Marital Power Law, known as BAMP). Finally, there has been a disassociation of the role of motherhood with that of being a wife (Izzard 1985; Kubanji 2013), i.e. one can be a mother without necessarily being a wife.

These factors have meant that, today, marriage is increasingly accepted as just one form of relationship in society, as especially female-headed households have established

themselves as another form of family structure. Indeed, Datta and Mcllwaine (2000) argue that the female-headed household is now a permanent feature in Botswana. It is now accepted that although marriage was once a critical stage in the life course, which separated girls from women, there has been a change in women's identity, as adulthood rests on other signifiers, such as having children and acquiring a dwelling (*Ibid*.).

It is evident that female-headed households in Botswana have a strong historical background and are now an established family structure. Research to date has shown that female-headed households are independent forms of relationships that provide an interesting avenue for academic inquiry into how people's ideas about relationships are changing, and which affect the manner in which marriage is being newly perceived as one amongst a plurality of recognised forms of relationships. This study argues that cohabitation is an equivalent family structure that can be profitably opened up for research.

This work furthermore aims to demonstrate that an analysis of cohabiting unions in Botswana reveals more than one type of cohabitation. In fact, there are different types of cohabitation, depending on how the union was formed and leading to what I will refer to as multiple cohabitations*.* While there is a diversity of established relationships that are socially recognised, it is also important to talk about a plurality of cohabitation in Botswana; maintaining a singular view of cohabitation will potentially overlook the differences between varieties of such unions. The multiple forms of cohabitation in Botswana above all reflect a paradoxical power relation at play between the older and younger generations. In particular, there is a paradox of power relations between parents and their children due to the decision-making freedom gained by the youth as a result of the emergence of a variety of recognised relationships. I argue that it is this paradox of parental authority in which, despite parents wanting their children to marry, some parents, in certain circumstances, enter into informal negotiations to establish non-marital unions. That is, while parents may want marriage, they

do not reject cohabitation outright. Moreover, we shall see, that cohabitation is not always a threat to marriage/parental authority; indeed, some forms of cohabitation actually strengthen both. So, while a plurality of relationship options has emerged that appear to be recognised to varying degrees, we should take care not to place this in the framework of a generational clash. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, alternative forms of relationships that are not regarded as marriage may still obtain parental approval and blessing.

1.8 Agency in the exploration of cohabitation

If marriage is not taken as the point of departure, how, then, does it change the social science understanding of relationships? If marriage and structure are not so intertwined – marriage otherwise being perceived as a fundamental structure of social life – what other factors influence how people come together in relationships? What theory is available to explain this? If agency, in the form of autonomous decisions about the organisation of relationships, plays a role, and relationships are no longer arranged by families and parents, how and why do agents decide to choose a partner for themselves?

Power has limitations. Foucault explains that though aimed at forging compliance, 'no exertion of power is without resistance' (1980:143). It is this resistance to power that allows for change, thus allowing for the expression of agency. Agency is about human capacity: the motivational strength to monitor social behaviour from a reflective distance and to come up with opportunities and alternatives that are not automatic, but which are inspired by the ways in which social realities always allow for many paths to be taken (De Bruin, Van Dijk and Gewald 2007: 8). Agency therefore accommodates situations where individuals will act contrary to the 'norm' because individuals are understood as sentient beings who are not 'fully pre-conditioned by structures' (*Ibid*.).

In order to understand the concept of agency, let me briefly sketch what is normally taken as the counterpart of agency, the structure, as discussed above. In order to communicate

the idea about structure and its role in societies, Giddens and Pierson (1998:77) argue that 'society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do.' Thus, societal processes are a result of sets of institutional mechanisms (structures) that people draw upon as they produce and reproduce society in their activities. Agency, on the other hand, is about the capacity of individual humans to act independently and to make their own choices. Agency, therefore, implies that actors make 'use of their cultures and worldviews, interests, capacity to give meanings, values, beliefs, and purposes to integrate experiences into their livelihood strategies and to look for outlets for aspirations, ambitions and solutions to problems' (De Haan, 2000: 349). According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), a temporal dimension is important in characterising agency:

> A temporal embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment) (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 963).

In Botswana, the importance of the notion of agency can be demonstrated by pointing at how autonomous decision-making and the self-fashioning of one's private life has become important, especially in the post-colonial years. Through education, the rise of a modern economy, the new position of women in the labour market and the impact of global media, ideas of alternative relationships have emerged. This is especially true in the urban centres of the country, where the younger generation is increasingly capable of creating an independent lifestyle. Yet, the problem with such a perception of agency is that it becomes bound up with the successful, emergent middle classes, i.e. the idea that agency only exists for those who

can afford it. Translating agency to the study of cohabitation would mean that – by implication – cohabitation can be equated with an agency exercised by the upcoming middle classes in Botswana. My fieldwork data demonstrates otherwise: less middle-class people cohabit compared to those in the lower socio-economic class. While methodological nuptialism is based on the assumption that marriage is the starting point for the understanding of relationships irrespective of social class and economic success (as it seems to apply to everybody), the question of agency contradicts this nuptialism; albeit only in terms of the analysis of the higher social classes. As Botswana also has a less affluent population, they should, in theory, lack this agency and therefore be bound to the institution of marriage, i.e. marriage as the only form of relationship that can exist for those who lack agency. While Van Dijk (2012) demonstrates in his studies how marriage has become a deep fascination for the emergent middle classes, in my study on cohabitation I will demonstrate how precisely to link – or not – agency and the lower socio-economic class to this type of relationship. Whereas agency may help to debunk methodological nuptialism and decentre marriage in the study of relationships, how much actual space there is for agency in the local structures of kinship and family on the ground in Molepolole requires careful exploration.

1.9 The rise of cohabitation: moralities beyond socio-economic factors

1.9.1 New relational forms and the reduction of stigma

The rise of non-marital relationships has been associated with a lessening of stigma about not being married and having a child outside marriage (Schapera 1939; Matthews 1940; Gulbrandsen 1986), as already explained above. With more children born out of wedlock, and most young people staying single longer, as they increasingly attended school, started working in the urban and mining centres, being a bachelor or a spinster gradually became free of stigma and child bearing before marriage became less of an infringement of

social norms. Women also began to participate more in the money economy and formal education, which reduced their tendency to be taken as second wives (Mair 1969). Women developed greater independence they began to shun polygamy and preferred to remain single and raise their children alone. Moreover, as the powers of the chiefs were reduced over matters such as land allocation, the laws concerning land also changed. While under a chieftaincy, women could not be allocated land, under the colonial government they could (Molokomme 1991).

There are important questions relating to social structure; that is, how a society understands, maintains and regulates its affairs. Research and writing on family life in Botswana has almost unanimously ascribed marriage with the purpose of regulating relations (Roberts & Comaroff 1977; Schapera 1936; Kuper 1970, 2017; Matthews 1940). The changes in family systems have previously been described by pointing at the changing functions of marriage in societies. However, today, new developments are constantly challenging and competing with that historically assumed central role of marriage. For decades, in Botswana, marriage has been seen as part of the basic principles of social structure, in the way marriage organised social life: these views emphasised the way marriage establishes new affinal relations, thereby establishing relatedness, provides accepted contexts for sex and procreation, makes clear lines of property inheritance, and marks one's social positioning and identity. Significant as these views may have been or still are, there is a substantial and contemporary growth of other relations and family types that question the 'central' role that marriage has been playing as a basic rule of structure in Botswana. This study takes cohabitation as a case in point.

Contrary to those views that assume that cohabitation exists as monolithic and characterised by a single set of social conditions (social, economic, otherwise), in the chapters that follow, this study will demonstrate that the phenomenon of cohabitation in

Botswana is multi-stranded. By disaggregating the variety of cohabiting unions, this study demonstrates that it is important to distinguish a number of types of cohabitation, each with their own conditions, forms of social acceptability and especially forms of recognition by kin and the wider social environment alike. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand and analyse cohabiting unions in Botswana, thereby problematising those moralising perceptions represented in the media and in public policies. After all, the effects of these negative moral perceptions are dire. Should one partner die before a relationship becomes a marriage, the surviving partner is usually subjected to unfair treatment, the relationship is treated as trivial (sometimes not even acknowledged) and inheritance rights are denied (Molokomme 1991, 2005; Griffiths 1997).

1.9.2 Christianity/ideology as a conducive factor

Wherever two cultures meet acculturation occurs. This requires a give-and-take situation that, at times, results in people clinging on to certain values. Hillman notes that 'the encounter of Christianity and local customs dates back to time immemorial' (1975: 1). This example of acculturation has resulted in changes to marriage in Africa. Christianity was introduced in Southern Africa around the eighteenth century by European missionaries. Missionaries endeavoured, among other things, to shape African marriages into Western-style unions. Missionaries believed African marriages to be immoral on a number of levels: first, as already discussed above, African marriages were largely polygamous and African practices such as widow inheritance and levirate marriages, which were inconsistent with European culture and therefore needed to be abolished. The issue of *bogadi* was also the basis of conflict between African culture and Christianity (see Chapter 4).

Weinrich (1983) finds a similarity between capitalism and Christianity. They both have a desire for 'precision and time.' Precision and time allow for a legal definition of a contract. Thus, the Christian churches require an exact date when a marriage comes into

being. A consequence of this pre-occupation with precision and time has been the insistence on marriage registration and church marriages that fix the exact date when a new marriage comes into being (Weinrich 1983: 77; Shropshire 1946). This makes marriage an event which is in contrast to marriage in these parts of Africa, where, traditionally, the process of marriage took place over a long period of time; in such cases, marriages are a process and not an event. As shall be discussed in the subsequent chapters, the tug-of-war between the early missionaries and African communities over *bogadi* resulted in a change to the timing of the presentation of *bogadi*, making it a prerequisite to marry in a church. That is, while in some Southern African traditions one could marry without giving *bogadi* as long as *patlo* had taken place, after having accepted the practice, the Church tended to make the giving of *bogadi* at marriage a prerequisite. This was done so that the date at which the marriage actually took place could be known and could be recorded on the marriage certificate. Preferably, *bogadi* was to be given before a marriage took place. The new timing for the giving of *bogadi* affected the process of establishing a marriage (Schapera 1928). This change contributed substantially to the establishment of unions that were no longer considered matrimony.

1.10 Statement of the problem

Is cohabitation a relational form in its own right? Though society is certainly not falling apart because of cohabitation, there is a need to acknowledge that marriage can no longer be taken as the sole foundation and the organising structure of society in the way suggested by the early anthropologists (Schapera, Comaroff, Roberts). One major question that needs to be addressed is: to what extent can we pursue an idea of discussing cohabitation independent of marriage? *Is it possible to study cohabitation without taking marriage as a starting point?* From an academic perspective, it is possible to study and discuss cohabitation – and the degree to which it is formalised – as one of a number of relationships that exist in a

society, including: single parenthood or female-headed households, prostitution and *bonyatsi* (concubinage).Interestingly, from a social perspective, separating cohabitation from marriage is almost impossible, since the idea of cohabitation and marriage seem so deeply intertwined that there is no way to socially view cohabitation in isolation to marriage. Cohabitees always talk about their unions in terms or in reference to marriage. Whereas one, unified form of marriage does not exist in Africa (there are unions that are polygamous, monogamous, patrilineal, matrilineal, etc.), the issue is that marriage, singlehood and cohabitation may each relate to very different social processes. Moreover, a decline in marriage does not automatically mean an increase in cohabitation, or vice versa; hence, how can cohabitation be understood as related to, but simultaneously partly independent of the fate of marriage? Therefore, studies that approach cohabitation in an analytical way are important. Such an analytic approach is possible if the researchers are able to distance themselves from any personal moral or other ideas they have of the union.

The main problem of this study is that cohabitation seems to have been primarily studied in comparison to marriage, while there is evidence that, increasingly, couples are cohabitating rather than marrying, and many will remain in such a relationship for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, the ending of a state of cohabitation does not necessarily mean marriage, since cohabiting relations can develop into other forms of social status, such as single parenthood. This approach to the study of cohabitation inhibits the full understanding of the phenomena and compromises the rights of especially women and children in the cohabitating unions.

Some research works, based on the assumption that cohabitation is an entirely separate entity, have made little attempt to explore the power relations between the cohabitees and other significant people in the process of cohabitation. Rhoades, Stanley and Markmann have made an important observation that despite a lot of literature being produced

on cohabitation, there is 'little about the psychology of cohabitation, that is, why couples begin cohabiting' (2009: 234). Their concern is that there is general knowledge about cohabitation that is generated through surveys that pays little attention to the views expressed by the cohabitees themselves about their cohabiting situation. The general knowledge in question is, for instance, data collected from: surveys; views expressed by high school seniors during a National Survey of Young Adults (Popenoe 2009: 429–430); church leaders; the national census, which is largely interested in statistics rather than in underlying reasons; politicians; and any other group of people that is not the cohabitees themselves. To address this gap, this study focuses on cohabitees and their parents, aunts and uncles, who are directly involved in the establishment of some of these cohabiting relationships.

If such an approach remains ignored, no policies will be formulated to protect the rights of people in cohabiting unions. Furthermore, the analysis in the study of cohabitation commonly lacks the consideration of power and agency in the creation of such unions. It also often excludes the role of parents in the establishment of cohabitating unions, thereby leading to the general perception that cohabitating unions are homogenous and may be an indicator of moral decay. Therefore through the following objectives this study addresses the problem that has been caused by methodological nuptialism in relation to cohabitation.

1.11 Objectives of the study

Through the following objectives the study demonstrates that by avoiding methodological nuptialism cohabiting unions can be understood better.

- To explore how cohabiting unions are established

- To appreciate factors contributing to establishment of cohabitation

- To explore how institutions in Botswana perceive cohabitation.

1.12 The purpose and significance of this study

The purpose of this study is to:

•   provide further understanding of processes in Botswana that are leading to changing relationship patterns

•   explore what is driving this relational change in Botswana

•   further problematise how the definition of cohabitation has been produced.

This study will benefit the following different audiences:

•   The general public will understand that cohabiting unions are not homogenous and will become more tolerant of such unions, and, in particular, of the women and children who are part of them. This change in perception may influence policymaking

•   Policymakers will better understand the need to put in place policies that will strengthen human rights and the dignity of individuals in respect to cohabitation.

•   Academia will acknowledge the effects of different developments in Southern African history that have led to changes in family life on the continent, which influence how adult sexual unions have been shaped overtime. This will lead to improved and less biased ways of studying relationships.

1.13 Thesis chapter outline

Chapter 1: Introduction: Cohabitation in Botswana

This chapter provides an academic account of the phenomenon of cohabitation, by discussing how scholars have studied and recorded the phenomenon and how they have produced data and insights in this regard. The chapter then focuses on how a normative ideology on cohabitation has been created in Botswana. The chapter further discusses the shifts over time

and developments in the study of African marriages in order to locate cohabitation in this continuum.

Chapter 2: Methodological Nuptialism in the Study of Relationships

This chapter explores how methodological nuptialism is evident in the study of relationships by arguing that though marriage and kinship are important in the understanding of how relations are formulated, other ways of becoming related have emerged and these must be understood since they are a social reality. By methodological nuptialism I mean and indicate the tendency in the Africanist study of relationships to foreground and privilege marriage as a paradigmatic starting point. The complexities of these other forms of relationship and their academic understanding are demonstrated.

Chapter 3: Challenging Methodological Nuptialism in Research Methodology

This chapter explores how methodological nuptialism relates to and possibly influences an ethnographic methodology by questioning whether underlying assumptions and a social ideology that prescribes marriage as a moral prerogative impact ethnographic methodology, and, if so, how? In each of the ethnographic research techniques the 'I' of the researcher is present; the identity of the researcher counts and the researcher takes part in inter-subjective exchanges with his or her interlocutors. The 'I' influences the research process in innumerable ways, ranging from the decisions pertaining to who, what, when and how to research and about the questions the researcher is asking.

Chapter 4: The Impact of Christianity on the Understanding of Social Relations

This chapter explores factors that have contributed to changes in the process of establishing a marriage in Botswana with particular reference to the presentation of *bogadi* through the exploration of the effects of Christianity (Ross 1955) on family life among Batswana. The

introduction of Christianity re-defined the procedures and timing of the giving of *bogadi* and the moralisation of marriage that advocated for Christian monogamous marriage. This necessarily relegated other, traditionally recognised unions as non-marital and hence illegitimate.

Chapter 5: Typologies of Cohabitation

This chapter endeavours to understand the phenomenon of cohabitation by establishing its two different typologies. The chapter begins with an understanding of how the typologies were established through negotiations between actors who are placed in different power relations and who exercise their agency differently. It continues by identifying and explaining the typologies. The chapter proceeds by exploring reasons for cohabitation and the effects of parental involvement in the establishing of the different types of cohabitation.

Chapter 6: Cohabitation and Institutions

This chapter explores the power of institutions and how their impact on social behaviour can be interpreted. The chapter further explores cohabitation in the context of these institutions, asking in what way institutions are relevant to the practice of cohabitation. It also examines the power relations involved as well as the moralities presented. It interrogates individual agencies and explores the extent to which cohabitation might be both a product of institutions and a domain for individual agency.

Chapter 7: Discussion, Summary and Conclusions

This chapter posits that though marriage is still considered an important institution in Botswana, single parenthood and cohabitation has risen as an alternative to this over time. Currently, more couples cohabit than marry due to external influences that emerge as Botswana develops. Studies on relationships have been largely conducted from a structural-

functional perspective, which focuses on social structures like *bogadi*, thereby disadvantaging those relationships in which *bogadi* has not been given. The chapter further explores the reality of cohabitation in Botswana and examines negative perceptions of such relationships in society. This chapter argues that even though the general public may demonstrate a negative attitude towards cohabitation there is no imperative for social scientists to adopt the same approach. The chapter then concludes that this reflects the extent of methodological nuptialism in the study of relations in Africa and in Botswana in particular.

In the next chapter, I will discuss methodological nuptialism in the study of relationships and how it has affected the position of other forms of relationship in society.

2.0 METHODOLOGICAL NUPTIALISM IN THE STUDY OF RELATIONSHIPS

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced cohabitation as a growing phenomenon with more couples in cohabiting unions than in marriage worldwide. The chapter explored the trends in adult sexual unions in Africa, from a period when marriage was ubiquitous and polygamy was an economically viable form of marriage. The chapter introduced the effects of Christianity and colonisation on Setswana procedures and processes for establishing and defining marriage, such as the rise of monogamy, female-headed households, childbirth outside marriage and non-marital unions like cohabitation. The chapter further questioned the way the scientific study of relationships has been shaped by public opinion.

This study distinguishes between marriage and the study of marriage and relationships. While marriage may be, or may have been important in Botswana, this does not explain why the study of relationships should have developed such an explicit focus on marriage, often to the neglect of a variety of other forms of relationships, in this case cohabitation. Why is it, for example, that until 1991 the Population and the Housing census of Botswana failed to capture cohabiting unions?

Anthropologists studying relationships in Southern Africa have focused on marriage (Schapera 1939; Kuper 1970; Matthews 1940; Townsend & Garey 1994). For instance, Comaroff and Roberts (1981) discuss examples of disputed marriages but do not discuss other unions. Indeed, it is not clear from their research whether the unions in question were marriages or cohabitation. In one such case (see Comaroff and Roberts 1981), a young man called Molefe, who had been cohabiting with Madubu for twenty years, developed an interest in another woman for whom he paid *bogadi.* In the process, he neglected Madubu and argued

that no *patlo* had taken place and therefore no marriage had ensued. This implies that these anthropologists were aware of couples who are living together but not married. However, their works generally lack further discussion of these unions. Where these relationships are discussed they are generally negatively compared to marriage.

Using the term methodological nuptialism, this study questions, for the case of Botswana, this over-emphasis on marriage. It argues that the study of other relationships mainly from the perspective that they are a 'deviation' from marriage may have been caused by the dominance of Christianity and the cultural conventions of Batswana.

This chapter explores how methodological nuptialism is evident in the study of relationships (Schapera 1939; Kuper 1977; Cheal 2008; Manting 2004; Mokomane 2005; Nukunya 1969), which have taken marriage as a starting point in discussing sexual relationships. This has had a negative effect on the understanding of other adult sexual unions that are not marriage. Why is it that the study of patrilineal and matrilineal kinship structures has attached so much importance to marriage? (Radcliffe-Brown 1950). Why has marriage been seen as tightly related to reproduction? Why has so much attention been devoted to the study of the demise of polygamous marriage in various parts of Africa with the introduction of Christianity and colonialism? (Falen 2008).

Christianity and colonialism introduced a kind of colonisation of consciousness (Comaroff & Comaroff 1989; Peter 1997) by imposing new (and often rigid) dichotomies determining which relations are to be perceived as 'marriage' and which relations could not belong to that sanctified category. In the process, it also began to declare 'cohabitation' deviant of the model of holy matrimony. In addition, while this perception of cohabitation as a label for certain relations emerged, these relations were declared 'immoral', as being against biblical teachings and as contradicting the strictures of colonial and post-colonial systems of law. The question is, how is this reflected in social science? Equally, did the

anthropology of relationships in Africa superimpose certain categorisations whereby 'marriage' came to be qualified in such a manner that a range of other relations were labeled as 'non-marital', including the category of 'cohabitation'? And, if so, what are the implications of this methodological nuptialism for a better and more balanced understanding of relationships that do have some structural and recognised features, yet do not fully qualify under Christian and law-based rulings as 'matrimony'?

Based on a sequence of census reports, we can conclude that in present-day Botswana marriage has become an exceptional relationship (Kubanji 2013) and that cohabitation has become a dominant form of relationship. Only around 18% of the population that is of marriageable age in Botswana is married. This means that by far the majority is unmarried and that for those not married the likelihood that they will marry at a point in the future has become doubtful (Gulbrandsen 1986). Therefore, cohabitation has become established, whether Christianity or public morality likes it or not. As shall be demonstrated later, Christianity and colonisation (money, economy, and formal education) have contributed to the re-defining of what marriage is, with particular reference to the timing of the giving of *bogadi*, thereby reducing some relationships that were traditionally regarded as marriage to mere cohabitation (see, for instance, Schapera's work among the Bakgatla). To argue that cohabitation is a recent development demands a re-examination of our definition of both cohabitation and marriage. If the difference between cohabitation and marriage is the absence of the doing of *patlo* and the giving of *bogadi*, then in Botswana cohabitation is as old as marriage. If this is not the case, then Christianity has made a great contribution to the rise of cohabitation, by excluding the poor from participating in marriage. As shall be demonstrated later in this chapter, cohabitation is a cultural tradition as well, since many socially accepted arrangements can be made to form a relationship, which questions the premise that cohabitation is a recent phenomenon. In the process of the introduction of Christianity and

colonialism to Botswana and perhaps Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, however, a moral landscape was created in which marriage became free of the social labels that cohabitation and other non-marital relationships acquired. The question then becomes whether the social science of relationships reinforced the process that Christianity and colonialism commenced in which relationships other than marriage were studied as a deviation from marriage.

2.2 Social issues in the study of relationships

As described above, the general perception by Batswana of cohabitation is negative and the perception of marriage is positive. But is it really this clear cut for people on the ground? Though the society may preserve certain terms and notions for marriage (faithfulness, trust, love) and certain for cohabitation (lack of trust, promiscuity), is such a dichotomy a true reflection of such relationships in the way cohabitees themselves experience these? The field data presented in this work suggests that, in fact, faithfulness in cohabiting relationships is expected. This is because some men involved in cohabiting unions feel that their relationships are at a double risk: from the partner herself, who might terminate the relationship without much consequence, and from other men who may feel free to court their partner since she is not married, i.e. technically she is still available. These risks arise precisely from the absence of *patlo* and *bogadi* in the process of the formation of a cohabiting union. Marriage has become contested due to many factors: emancipation, feminism, secularisation, the improved position of women in the labour market, independence in reproduction and also HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of cohabitation in Botswana is largely attributed to poverty (Mokomane 2005b), with the idea that cohabitation will go away when the social status of individuals changes and they eventually get married. However, given that Botswana has become one of the middle income earning societies in Africa, why is it a place where cohabitation has become the dominant form of relationship? I would argue, therefore,

that cohabitation in Botswana cannot be exclusively explained by poverty; as will be discussed in Chapter 5, the situation is much more complex. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss all these factors, but I will illustrate the point using just one: gender.

2.3 Gender and marriage: Is marriage perfect?

Despite existing general negative perceptions of cohabitation, research indicates that marriage is not always a safe haven for couples either (Agot, Stoep, Tracy, Obare, Bukusi, Ndiya-Achola, Moses & Weiss 2010; Carter, Kraft, Koppenhaver, Galavoti Roels, Kilmarx, & Fidzani 2007; Ntozi 1997; Smith 2007; Clark 2004; Adetunji 2001). These works show that though marriage is portrayed as being an ideal institution, it simultaneously poses a threat, especially for women. This is because the ideals of faithfulness and trust, though expected, are not always fulfilled in marriage. Since trust and faithfulness are expected in marriage, this can be leading to serious complications whereby in cases where women suspect that their husbands might be cheating on them, they cannot use condoms in this era of HIV/AIDS (Smith 2007). Self-protection from HIV/AIDS for married women using condoms becomes almost impossible. 'For women whose husbands cheat, protecting themselves through condom use is difficult, if not impossible' (Smith 2007: 1002). This suggests that it is easier for a single woman to negotiate for safe sex than a married woman. Feminist scholarship opposed marriage long ago, saying it is a patriarchal institution that keeps women in bondage and dependency, limits their opportunities for self-development and growth, and legitimises the exploitation of women for their labour, sexuality and their reproductive capacities.

Carter et al. (2007) conducted a study in Botswana aimed at 'describing sexual concurrency and related norms and behaviours among a sample of 807 participants' (2007: 822). The study found that there are beliefs and norms that support or can be associated with

concurrent sexual behaviour. The study further found that infidelity is rampant in marriage. Their findings reveal that 'concurrency was not confined to the narrow sub-groups (like cohabitation and singlehood), it was reported across different education level, areas of residence and marital status' (*Ibid.*). This implies that, marriage cannot be excluded in a discussion of multiple sexual partnerships as a contributory factor in fighting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Therefore, since unfaithfulness is found in both, the negative connotations should apply to the marriage in the same way as it does to non-marital relationships like cohabitation.

High HIV prevalence is also reported among widows (Smith 2007; Clark 2004; Adetunji 2001). This again indicates that marriage poses a danger for women in the face of HIV/AIDS epidemic. Agot et al. (2010) carried out a study on 'Widow Inheritance and the HIV prevalence in Bondo District, Kenya' and found that many widows are infected with HIV by their late husbands. In other words, these women were infected while married. On the same note, Smith (2007) adds that '[f]or women in Nigeria, as in many settings, simply being married can contribute to the risk of contracting HIV […] Married women's greatest risk of contracting HIV is through having sexual intercourse with their husbands.' If all relationships are studied objectively, then, in the case of HIV/AIDS prevention more relevant intervention programmes could have been produced.

These are the questions that this work tries to engage with. This work argues that methodological nuptialism compromises the understanding of cohabitation. This has led to an umbrella approach in the study of all cohabiting unions, which are labeled as deviant and against the authority of parents, Christianity and colonisation. By advocating for the ideal of a monogamous marriage, these factors have led to the current elevated status of marriage at the expense of other adult sexual relationships. The question is, therefore, that while the general public's views have developed in this manner how does social science negotiate a different

perspective that avoids such a dominant focus on relationships, questioned, problematised and balanced against an interest in other forms of relationships?

This chapter explores the centrality of marriage in some classical studies on relationships. It then discusses the emerging alternative relationships to demonstrate how, over time, marriage has been challenged by other forms of relations that ultimately question its central role. The chapter will then address the work of Carsten (2000), which explores how kinship studies have been challenged by a perspective on alternate ways of relatedness, moving away from a place where relatedness has always been understood through marital and blood ties. There is an overwhelming view in family studies that to be related one has to trace a relationship through blood/lineage or through marriage. Kinship in anthropology has been largely defined through blood and marriage, but such an approach has been challenged by advances in human reproductive science and other emerging ways of relatedness. I now explore how methodological nuptialism has frequently dominated studies of relationships.

2. 4 Classical kinship studies and methodological nuptialism

2.4.1 Meaning of family

Studying what families are and how they are formed has been a principle domain of anthropological study of African societies. These studies perceived and understood kin relations as being primarily based in terms of blood and marriage (Kuper 1977; Matthews 1940). For instance, Kuper describes the basic element of social structure as the family and he describes the family as '[…] the group formed by a man and his wife and their children' (1977: 131). This definition of 'family' asserts that marriage, as in 'a man and his wife', and a blood relation, as in 'parents and their children', is the basis of any social structure. Such a definition perceives as deviant any relationship in which marriage has not taken place. Kuper explains that a family involves three individual groups: parents and children; children of the

same parents; and parents of the same children (*Ibid*.). Again, such a definition of family excludes any form of relationship that is not marriage. The absence of a detailed discussion of non-marital relationships like cohabitation has led to the exclusion of the said unions in the anthropological definitions of what constitutes a family. This approach has created a knowledge gap, over time, concerning those relationships in which marriage has not taken place. Some scholars in their work among African societies have observed that there were some relationships that were not marriage. However, in most cases, such relationships were simply mentioned and hardly discussed in any meaningful detail (Schapera 1939; Nukunya 1969). For instance, Schapera conducted his studies among the Bakgatla in Botswana (then Bechuanaland), and acknowledged in his studies that some non-marital relationships existed. However, he does not elaborate on these, nor does he conceptualise exactly how the relationships differed from marriage or how they functioned.

Nukunya (1969) carried out fieldwork between June 1962 and April 1963 among the Anlo Ewe in Ghana. Among other things, he discovered that among the Ewe there are certain restrictions to spouse selection or marriage propositions, including incest or adultery. Like Schapera (1939), he observes in his study that not all relationships among the Ewe are marriage and he writes that Ewe society '[…] prohibits marriage and cohabitation between relatives of certain categories, they also approve and even encourage marriage of relatives of certain categories' (1969). The same applies to Botswana, where, among many ethnic communities, there was (and, to an extent, still is) a preference for cross-cousin marriage. There is, however, no preference for same-sex marriage. Though cohabitation was found to exist, it was not further explored. For instance, Nukunya observes that:

[…] not all women go through the proper ceremonies […] the interference of parents and relatives in the choice of partners often resulted in the disagreement between the

girls and their parents. This gives rise to some cases of elopement and open revolt against the parental authority (Nukunya 1969: 67).

Elopement is not a recognised marital relationship. However, though having observed this non-marital phenomenon, Nukunya (1969) does not discuss it further. This pro-marriage approach to the study of adult sexual relationships has led to a trend in anthropology of failing to provide further analysis of non-marital sexual relationships.

2.4.2 Meaning of relatedness

Another way that (family/sexual) relationships have been studied was to 'study terms used to denote relatives' (Kuper 1977: 131). Such terms normally place one in relation to the other in either marriage or blood relations and, where such relationships were established outside marriage, and then derogatory terms were used to describe individuals in such unions. According to Kuper:

> The difference, (between consanguity and kinship) if we consider an illegitimate child in our society, such a child has a genitor (physical father), but has no pater (social father). Social fatherhood is virtually determined by marriage […] kinship therefore results from the recognition of a social relationship between parents and children which is not the same thing as physical relationship and may/may not coincide with it […] for it is not sexual intercourse that constitutes marriage either in Europe […] or among the savage[5] people. Marriage is a social arrangement by which a child is given a legitimate position in the society determined by parenthood in the social sense (Kuper 1977: 190–191).

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[5] The term is used with caution since it is a direct quotation. The author acknowledges that the term is problematic today and out-dated

What I discern from Kuper's study is that marriage and blood relations formed kinship. That he is able to describe children born out of wedlock as 'illegimate' alludes to the fact that such relationships existed and within which he so called 'illegitimate' children were born. This begs the question, why were such situations not explored further, i.e. why they were ignored?

Pauli (2010) carried out studies in Fransfontein in Namibia and found terms that differentiate between children born in and out of wedlock: these children were differentiated as 'marriage children' and 'out of marriage children'. In one Protestant church, 'out of marriage children' are called 'sin children'. Such derogatory terms are also found in studies in Botswana, as reflected by the title of Molokomme's *Children of the Fence.* The term 'children of the fence' is a translation of a Setswana saying '*bana ba dikgora.'* The term 'fence' is used to refer to the fact that the father of the child 'jumped the fence', i.e. used an un-gazetted entry point to have a child. The only gazetted entry would be after the giving of *bogadi*. If the study of non-marital relationship is not objective then individuals in these relationships will continue to be marginalised.

What has anthropology lost by not delving into such study of relationships? Various early anthropological scholars worked among different peoples in Africa on the development of marital and non-marital relations: Schapera (1939) among the Tswana, Evans-Pritchard (1945) among the Nuer, Mair (1953) in central Africa, and Colson (1962) among the Tonga. All these studies placed marriage central to defining relationships by emphasising the importance of bride wealth in marriage. In his work among the Nuer Evans-Pritchard points out that:

Until a man is married and begets children, he has not reached full manhood, and that a man desires children who will keep his memory green and to whom he can make his wants in dreams (Evans-Pritchard 1945: 6).

Such sentiments about marriage became central to most studies on African societies. For instance, in his work among the Kgatla (Bakgatla) in Botswana (then Bechuanaland protectorate), Schapera draws the same conclusion about the importance of marriage when he observes that, among the Bakgatla, marriage is so important that the question is purely when and who to marry, rather than whether to marry or not (1939).

Acknowledging the centrality of marriage among African societies, Phillips (1953) has attributed a number of factors that might have given the institution of marriage an elevated social position in relation to other sexual relationships in society. Phillips argued that the centrality of marriage, especially a polygamous one, was influenced by a number of factors, including the need for labour to till the land and herd cattle, i.e. marriage was a way to organise and maintain labour. The same is expressed by other scholars (Mair 1969; Schapera & Comaroff 1991; Schapera 1939; Kubanji 2013). The point is that polygamous marriages were important. Polygamous marriages ensured the birth of many children, therefore the 'the larger the cooperating group, the greater the possibilities, wealth and defense against enemies (Phillips 1953: 1). Philips further justified the existence of polygamous marriage because 'the more children are born to any group the greater are its hopes of expansion', (*Ibid.*) what Guyer (1995) refers to as wealth in people. Thus, polygamous marriage became the ideal relationship for agrarian African societies, since within marriage 'legitimate' children are born and wives obtained who contribute to the general accumulation of wealth for the patriarchal family.

It can therefore be argued that marriage, as expounded by classical research and writing, was perceived as the most important relationship in most African countries and was interpreted as playing a fundamental role in the life and substance of the communities. This centrality of marriage was then positioned in anthropology as an already structured

institution, which can, comparatively, be more convenient to study compared to non-marital relationships. That is, since marriage was interpreted as a social structure with practical functions in society, it then became studied more than relationships such as cohabitation, which appeared to lack functionality in the structures of society. The theoretical paradigm of structural functionalism, which proclaims that institutions, rituals, etc. are all functionally located in society, sees institutions like marriage as performing important functions in and for society. This has led to more studies related to marriage than non-marital relationships.

2.5 Methodological nuptialism and structural-functionalism

Structuralism as a guiding theory in understanding human relations in society was formulated by Levi Strauss. Structuralism holds that people perceive the world in binaries and that every culture can be understood in terms of these binary oppositions (Strauss 1963: 138–161). Structuralism then provides ways through which these opposites hang together. These binaries are overcome, for example, through initiated relationships of exchange. In these reciprocal relations of exchange, structuralism emphasises the importance of social structure and minimises the importance of the action of the individual in society (Haralambos 1996). Marriage is seen as a fundamental form of relationship through which reciprocal arrangements are made between families or social groups, often taking the form of the exchange of women. Structuralism leaves little room for the exploration of individual agency or free choice, as marriage provides a way for an elementary structure for the reproduction of society to be arranged that is not open to the individual expression of free will. As it is families that marry, marriage then becomes a factor of exchange between these groups. In such structural interpretations, the significance of marriage lies in the ways in which an exogamous relationship between two families is established, more than between the two individuals that are being married. Thus, marriage is based on a notion of reciprocal

exchange; in Southern Africa women are circulated in conjunction with the reciprocal circulation of cattle. This exchange and circulation forms a basic, structural form for the organisation of society. On the other hand, cohabitation appears to be more than just a reversal of structuralism. It is also a negation of structuralism in the way that it emphasises not the reciprocal structure between families, but rather individual choice. It seems fundamentally lacking in the aspect of binary reciprocal exchange. What, then, are the social implications of cohabitation?

The structural functionalist approach argues that society is comprised of different structures that are recognisable in particular social patterns. A point that is poignantly captured by a recent study by Pauli and van Dijk when they observe that 'For long, structural-functional approaches emphasised the centrality of the institution of marriage for the anthropological understanding of kinship systems, socio-economic relations, ethnicity and religion, and for the functioning of political systems' (2016:257). These structures require certain functions that are important for the maintenance of order and stability of society as a whole. At the level of perceiving the necessity of functions, a community becomes one in which 'all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency without producing persistent conflicts' (Layton 1997: 35). This is why some studies began talking of the 'African Marriage System' (Mair, 1953), as if it is a single integrated system that is essentially different from marriage in Europe or other parts of the world. Newman (2010) defines structural functionalism as a theory that perceives society as a complex system composed of various elements that work together to keep society alive. Structural functionalism addresses the social structure as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements, namely norms, customs, traditions and institutions. Thus, any relationship that does not conform to a prescribed pattern becomes difficult to study, and is therefore ignored.

The structural functional approach renders the individual powerless. Boas describes the powerlessness of an individual thus: 'none of these people are free from conventional proscriptions and rules' (1940: 663 in Layton 2006). Malinowski emphasised the same point when he asserted that 'natives followed the forces and commands of the tribal code without comprehending them' (1922: 11 in Layton: 2006). To what extent does cohabitation, which does not seem to confirm these elementary forms of kinship, contest the view that the individual has little to no agency? How powerless is the individual when it comes to forming relationships? And how powerful is the force of the structure against the individual?

Structural functionalism has largely been 'criticised for accepting social arrangements without examining how they might exploit or otherwise disadvantage certain groups or individuals within a society' (Newman 2010: 18). This is because the approach elevates the needs and interests of the society over those of the individual. This approach to the study of human relationships emphasises a society's dominant cultural patterns at the expense of individual interests. It leaves little room for understanding how individuals may act against society's structures. Structural-functionalism has difficulty with acknowledging that, occasionally, the interest of an individual can be in conflict with those interests of the rest of society. What then makes the individual act against the expected cultural norms to pursue their own interests? While structural-functionalism perceives the 'existence of a deep structure that would render predictability of a social behaviour possible' (De Bruin, Van Dijk and Gewald 2007: 7), the theory fails to explain those behaviours, like cohabitation, that seem to be unpredictable and that refuse to conform. This theory tends to obliterate a perception of individuals and their abilities as rational beings (*Ibid.*), and therefore makes it difficult to explain and appreciate instances where individuals or groups act contrary to structural expectations.

From a structural-functionalist perspective, the study of relationships should

necessarily study marriage. It is the structure that defines what is acceptable or not as far as relationships are concerned. In terms of sexual relationships, marriage conforms to society's norms. This has resulted in the production of an extensive literature that explores the function of marriage for kinship-structures in society (Kuper 1970; Matthews 1940; Comaroff & Roberts 1970). Kinship has also been used to study intimate relationships.

2.6 Methodological nuptialism and kinship

Kinship is about the structure of relationships, i.e. how people relate to one another. Different scholars have studied kinship (Radcliffe-Brown & Forde 1950; Macionis & Plummer 1997; Parkin & Nyamwaya 1987). The focus of studies about how people relate to one another, in anthropology and other related fields like sociology, has predominantly been through blood and marriage. While Radcliffe-Brown & Forde (1950) introduced the perception of kinship and marriage as belonging to an essential African system that defined family and relationships in structural-functional terms, Parkin and Nyamwaya (1987) were critical of and deviated from this model, highlighting important transformations that could not have taken place if the system had been completely 'closed'.

Biology and marriage have been applied as factors determining and establishing how people relate to one another. 'Most families have been built on kinship, a social bond based on blood, marriage and adoption, that joins individuals into families [...] throughout the world families form around marriages, a legally sanctioned relationship involving economic as well as normative sexual activities' (Macionis & Plummer 1997: 436). Kinship structure has been important in understanding how social roles are being defined in family systems, such as the roles and positions of the father, the mother's brother, the cousin, etc., in the sense that structure produces particular roles and positions that are independent of the people who

perform them. For those who perform these roles, there are patterns of expectations regarding what people are supposed to do and how.

Seen in this way, marriage is the way in which relationships are established and maintained. In the patrilineal system, wives marry into the family of the man in an exchange and a bride wealth is given (such as in Botswana). In a matrilineal system, the man marries into the family of the wife, usually in exchange for bride service (such as in Malawi and Ghana). Though in matrilineal societies the man marries into the wife's family, her mother's brother is a very important figure. For this study, I will focus on the patrilineal system as Botswana is a patriarchal society.

Patriarchy is a male dominated social system, with men having authority over women and children. Patriarchy also refers to the dominance of men in social or cultural systems. It may also include social titles being traced through the male line; that is, the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male lineage (Matthews 1940; Kuper 1970). It is a social system in which the father or a male elder has absolute authority over the family group; a form of social organisation in which a male is the head of the family, and descent, kinship and titles are traced through the male lineage. Patriarchy can be associated with patrilineal marriage relations, but also with matrilineal ones, since in both cases the control over the relations and their exchanges may rest firmly in the hands of the (elderly) men of the families involved.

In a patrilineal marriage system, the desire often is to seek how the institution of marriage serves the interest of the patriclan. In this respect, studies have focused on how the understanding of the purpose of the payment of bride wealth has been interrogated and conclusively positioned as structurally serving the interests of men. Kuper (1970) and Matthews (1940) argue that, in fact, bride price serves the purpose of transferring child-bearing powers from the family of the woman to that of the man and his family.

Cohabitation presents a difficulty as it does not seem to conform to the ideal relationship, from patriarchal and patrilineal perspectives in the case of Botswana. For this reason, cohabitation has escaped the interest of many scholars on family life in Africa, especially in Southern Africa. This work argues that by removing all pre-conceived perceptions about cohabitation, as we shall see later, there is much we can learn about this form of union. Failure to study cohabitation in its own right has created a knowledge gap that has resulted in the treatment of cohabiting unions as homogenous. Such approaches are largely informed by studying social sexual relationships through the lens of structural-functionalism.

2.7 Marriage and social positioning

From a structural-functionalist perspective, the study of the meanings and functions of marriage payments become central. For instance, on the importance of the meaning of marriage payments, Comaroff says that '[…] it is often asserted that bride wealth is necessary to affiliate the progeny of a union to the man's agnatic grouping and his heirs' (1980: 171). This view is also shared by Kuper (1963), who carried out a study among the Tswana in South Africa. He found that marriage, facilitated by the exchange of cattle, plays a central role in Tswana society. He states the importance of bride wealth and explains that it has been sustained due to its central role in defining the social status of individuals:

The exchange of cattle for wives, taking a variety of organizational ideological and ritual forms, pervaded traditional, social and cultural life in the region…despite radical changes in the economy and the frontal assault of the missionaries, bride wealth institutions proved to be extremely durable, adapting to varied and indeed revolutionary new circumstances (Kuper 1963: 3).

The role that bride wealth plays in the social positioning of individuals, especially children, arises from the payment of bride wealth as a social structure with a function, i.e. that of defining relations. This has contributed to marriage becoming central in the study of relationships, to the extent that those relationships that had not fulfilled or undergone the exchange of bride wealth were then seen as deviant relationships. For example, as discussed by Nukunya (1967), cohabitation is usually presented as a negative relationship. Nukunya explained the existence of cohabitation in terms of a failed marriage, because, in this case, the parents and their daughters failed to agree on spouse selection. The exchange of bride wealth was so central that:

> The transfer of the rights of children was permanent. Children could not be claimed by the wives' relatives even in the event of divorce or in any other circumstances. Moreover, even after the death of the husband the widow was expected to bear children in his name; specific leviratic or seed-raising arrangements were made for the widows of child bearing age (Kuper 1963: 26).

Another contributing factor that has, over time, positioned marriage as the ideal relationship is the function it has performed in defining the status of men and women in society. Many scholars have observed, in different societies, (for example, Schapera studied Bakgatla and Nukunya studied the Ewe), that matrimony gave a new and respectable status to those who got married. Nukunya writes that 'to pass from the category of child to that of adult a girl must go through a full marriage ceremony' (1963: 103). Though I do not dispute the important role played by marriage, the problem is that the sole focus on marriage has led to a way of studying relationships that ignores any other form of relationship in which no bride wealth has been exchanged. For instance, Nukunya also mentions in his study that it was not

always the case that all women of a marriageable age would actually get married. In a similar vein, Dyson-Hudson and Meekers (1996) conducted a study among Turkana males in which they question the universality of marriage.

On this note, Nukunya writes that '[…] the procedure of first becoming a wife has now tended to be reversed and some girls aim at first becoming pregnant and then considering how to make a man marry and maintain them […] many young men sure wish to make sure that their girlfriends are capable of bearing children before embarking on marriage' (1963: 109). This implies that marriage was not a prerequisite for childbearing. This notion is also expressed in the lyrics of a song by the South African musician, Jonny Mokhali '[…] *ntsholele ngwana ke tle ke go itsise gae, ntsholele ngwana ke tle ke go nyale'* ('give me a child so that I introduce you to my family; give me a child so that I can marry you'). Nukunya further explains the role of sexual intercourse '[…]as the prerogative of married life, and whenever it occurs before marriage or outside marriage, the reaction to it depends on the question whether it can lead to marriage' (*Ibid*.: 67).

However, despite an increase in alternatives to marriage, matrimony is still held as the ideal by which other relations are evaluated. Kuper explains the importance of bride wealth thus: 'the fundamental bride-wealth rule was that the marital rights in women were transferred against the payment of cattle […] the transfer of rights was permanent' (Kuper 1977: 26). This perception of the rights conferred through marriage has led to a proliferation of studies centred on this particular function of bride wealth in different African societies. The role of marriage in legitimating different categories of individuals according to their rights and obligations has therefore contributed to more studies on marriage than other relationships.

Phillips (1953) captures well the role of the payment of bride wealth:

Legitimate children are secured by marriage in due form, and the importance of securing legitimate descendants accounts for the most characteristic feature of African marriage law (Phillips 1953:1).

It was indeed important to have legitimate children, and this legitimacy was defined by society and was directly related to inheritance, of both property and social position, such as who were the heirs to a chieftaincy. Molokomme (1991), in her book, *Children of the Fence* in which she discusses the legal status of children born out of wedlock in Botswana, shows how the fate of children born to unmarried parents is tied to that of their mother, who cannot inherit intestate, simply because she is not married to their father and is therefore not entitled to his inheritance. She demonstrates how, in Botswana, Christianity and colonialism, with their emphasis on the ideal of a monogamous relationship, have contributed to the view that marriage was the ideal relationship also from a customary standpoint (which had always allowed for many types of marriages) as well as from a colonial and post-colonial perspective. Any woman involved in a non-marriage relationship has not been through the exchange of bride price, which would position any children with their father's kin. This non-performance of the exchange of bride wealth positions such children as illegitimate. On the same note, Colson (1962), who worked among the Tonga in what was then Northern Rhodesia notes that children in African societies have always been valued and cherished. She comments that:

The birth of children provides a new insurance to marriage. The interest of the group which may be at odds over the conflicting rights of husband and wife are joined together in the children of the marriage who bring the groups together (Colson 1962: 147).

She further explores how a Tonga woman, who is unable to have children, laments her infertility: 'when I am old no one will take care of me' (Colson 1962:147). Among the Tonga, it is common to desire children, and especially so within marriage. This inevitably gave marriage an advantaged social position. A transaction involving the rights of the individuals takes place through the exchange of bride price, '[…] by the act of marriage the father and agnatic kindred surrender a greater part of these rights over the daughter to her husband and to his agnatic kindred' (Radcliffe-Brown & Forde 1965: 41). Radcliffe-Brown and Forde state that:

> [B]ride wealth also guarantees the husband custody of all children born by his wife […] bride wealth also helps stabilize a union by dissuading a wife leaving her husband's home at will or at a slight provocation, since bride wealth should be refunded in full upon divorce, it is to the advantage of bride's parents and relatives to try to settle disputes and re-establish cordial relationship between the couple (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1965: 41).

The emphasis placed on the importance of bride wealth therefore presupposes that relationships where bride wealth has not been given are not as significant. This work further demonstrates that, among the Batswana, some cohabiting unions are certainly intended to endure, since provisions are made (as we shall see later) to ensure their longevity. Evans-Pritchard (1990), who studied the Nuer, said of the importance of children, marriage and bride wealth that:

> Children are attached by payment of bride wealth to the lineage of their father. They are 'children of the cattle' and therefore of the man in whose name they are paid, and

they become joint in his branch of descent. The man in whose name the cattle were paid is always their pater, the legal or lineage father, whether he is their genitor or not (Evans-Pritchard 1990: 98).

The importance attached to marriage in most African societies influenced the focus of early anthropologists who studied relationships in the continent. I argue that while there was a focus on marital relations, other relations remained under-studied. Even when other forms of relationships were acknowledged, as in the case of Schapera, marriage still took precedence. Thus, early anthropologists deprived their readership of an understanding of other relationships and their place in the 'structure' of society as compared to formal marriage.

I acknowledge, here, Evans-Pritchard's (1940) work among the Nuer, which recognised other forms of marriage. What I found interesting in his work is that the Nuer do not treat relationships within marriage as homogenous. There are multiple marriages that are socially recognized, including what he describes as ghost marriages[6] and levirate[7] marriages which are common in some African societies (Schapera (1939) among the Batswana). He also discusses rare marriages in which a woman can marry another woman (not a homosexual marriage since no sex actually takes place between the two women) (Evans-Pritchard 1940). The only accepted condition for such a marriage is that at least one of the women marrying must be infertile and has reached the menopause. This woman, who is unable to have children, then counts as a man and is then, afforded certain privileges that are usually reserved for men. For instance, she can inherit cattle. Evans-Pritchard adds that a woman who is infertile:

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[6] A ghost marriage is a marriage where a deceased groom is replaced by his brother. The brother serves as a stand in to the bride, and any resulting children are considered children of the deceased spouse. [...] Among the Nuer, a ghost marriage is nearly as common as a marriage to a live man.

[7] Levirate marriage is a type of marriage in which the brother of a deceased man is obliged to marry his brother's widow, and the widow is obliged to marry her deceased husband's brother

Practices as a magician or diviner and thereby acquires further cattle and if she is rich, she can marry several wives. She is their legal husband and can demand damage if they have relations with other men without her consent (Evans-Pritchard 1990: 108–109).

However, it should be noted that, although the Nuer acknowledge such relationships, these relationships are 'proper' marriages, since bride wealth is given. Likewise, by studying cohabitation for its own sake, this study argues that cohabiting relationships need to be disaggregated to have a clearer picture of what they actually are. Evans-Pritchard's (1945) discussion of non-marital relationships was in a way exceptional in examining relationships that seem to be outside the norm. Writing about non-marital relationships, Evans-Pritchard pointed out that a woman in such a relationship is derogatorily referred to as having no 'cattle on her back' (*Ibid*: 119). He also talks of a relationship in which a poor man can only afford half of the bride wealth. His in-laws accept this, but this does not free the woman from the social stigma arising from the incomplete payment, and she is referred to as 'half concubine, half wife' (*Ibid*.).

Such intolerance towards these kinds of relationships can be interpreted as arising from the elevated status of marriage. Has this social reality influenced social science in the study of these processes in such a way that marriage is made the standard by which other relations are being interpreted? It is important to acknowledge that societies have their own norms and values, i.e. marriage as the ideal relationship, yet there is need to understand where these values come from, who the protagonists are and how such values often work to the exclusion and marginalisation of those who appear not to live up to such expectations. This study argues that, in order to avoid methodological nuptialism, we must firstly understand where and how prescriptions and a pursuit of monogamous marriages came from.

Who in society is advantaged and disadvantaged by this? And how did such relationships develop? How and why did the social science of marriage and kinship preference the view that marriage is the ideal focus for research on relationships in Africa? How can this perspective on the centrality of marriage as the starting point for exploring relationships be de-centred? This study argues that making a particular relationship central to the study of other relationships is influenced by and influences how these other relationships are understood and perceived. I contend that, since society, anthropologists and other social scientists working in the society in question have given so much emphasis to marriage and bride wealth, any relationship lacking these characteristics are often treated as trivial and insignificant.

Literature on studies of African kinship reveals that marriage and, in particular the exchange of bride wealth, has been the focus of scholars and anything that does not fit into the prescribed form of relationship is treated as trivial and consequently given derogatory names. The undisputed fact is that such relationships exist. As we shall see in this work, it is not the failure to get married that is problematic, but the methodologies that have been adopted in the study of relationships that have placed marriage as central.

This study reveals that cohabiting unions are not homogenous and the couples in question are not always 'hopeless about their situation'. The social status of marriage and the extensive literature on marriage has, over time, placed marriage as a starting and reference point when discussing, understanding and engaging with other social-sexual relationships.

In Botswana, as elsewhere in Africa, marriage has increasingly been challenged as the ideal form of union by the rise in alternatives to marriage, the availability of alternative sexualities such as homosexuality and advances in the protection of human rights. In the following section, I will demonstrate how similar arguments have been raised in kinship studies, where defining relatedness through marriage and blood ties are being challenged by

advances in bio-medicine. The purpose of the next section is to demonstrate that in the same way that advances in medical sciences have proven that relatedness can take different forms, relationships, too, can be created in different alternatives.

2.8 Developments in family formation

This section diverts focus from the structural-functionalist approach to alternatives to relatedness in order to demonstrate and explore other ways that relatedness has been established. This will demonstrate the importance of the study of cohabitation in its own right. Studies have questioned marriage and blood as the basis of relatedness; likewise, marriage as the basis for family formation is questioned by the rise of alternate family formations such as cohabitation.

2.8.1 Alternatives to kinship

Carsten's (2000) *Cultures of Relatedness*, questions the long-standing prescriptions of relatedness that place marriage and blood relations at the center of how people form ties**.** The purpose of exploring the Carsten's study on relatedness is to demonstrate that if the definition of relatedness through blood and marriage has been successfully challenged by advances in bio-medicine, then this could be a cue for social science to avoid a primary focus on marriage as the dominant form through which kinship is established.

In her preface, Carsten says that:

> Our understanding of what makes a person a relative has been transformed by radical changes in marriage arrangements and gender relations and by new reproductive genealogies. We can no longer take it for granted that our most fundamental relationships are grounded in biology or nature (Carsten 2000, preface).

Carsten mentions that we are always conscious of our connections to other people, and that these connections carry different weights, be it socially, materially or affectionately. She then points out that these connections can be described in more than just genealogical terms (Carsten *Ibid*.: 1). However, such an approach to explaining how people become related is 'deceptively simple' (*Ibid*.: 2), since there are some forms of relatedness, such as friendship, that are not necessarily genealogical, but which are very meaningful and important. A particular and restricted way of understanding society, marriage, relatedness, role allocation, etc., becomes a challenge when alternative ways emerge. Developments in bio-medical science, including the increasing ability to control and arrange reproduction have produced 'fictive kinship' (*Ibid*.). This is also strengthened by adoption, fostering and other models of kin relations that are becoming part and parcel of society today.

2.8.2 Development of bio-medical science

Children have always been central in African life (Schapera 1939; Mbiti 1975; Kuper 1977) and most societies in Africa have always had ways of dealing with childlessness. For instance, Mogobe (2005) carried out a study in Botswana among women who were infertile and found that they preferred to embrace bio-medical rather than traditional options. The traditional way of addressing childlessness was by adopting a child of a relative (Boschow, 2012). However, with advances in medicine, women are shunning such adoptions also because of the disadvantages that are associated with the traditional options:

> The identity of the biological parents is never a secret, as a result as the child grows up, people are likely to tell them that this woman is not your real mother […] the child may eventually return […] (Mogobe 2005: 33).

Mogobe demonstrates above how the traditional ways of defining family are challenged by advances in bio-medicine as they give infertile women better and more fulfilling options. For instance, women with fertility problems would rather seek medical assistance than adopt a child of a close relative. Traditional social structures like polygamy can no longer adequately solve problems of infertility. On this point, Pishigan (2009) says that, over the course of centuries, polygamy has served as a solution to infertility in the absence of effective technological or medical solutions. With advances in the bio-medical field, other solutions have emerged: surrogacy, adoption, in-vitro fertilisation and human cloning. These alternatives have resulted in new types of families not tied by biology and blood. For instance, human cloning, despite its ethical concerns (see Burley & Harris 1999; Harris 1999), cloning is gradually becoming an option to address the issue of infertility for infertile couples and helping homosexuals to have children who are related to them. Strong (2005), in favour of cloning, states:

> Cloning combined with genetic modification can be ethically justifiable when out by infertile, lesbian and gay couples as a means to have children with a genetic relationship to both members of the couple (Strong 2005: 654).

Theoretically, these bio-medical ways of establishing kinship extend the range of circumstances under which relatedness can be established. We can no longer argue that kinship and biology are the only factors important in defining how relatedness is created. The idea here is to demonstrate how paying particular attention to each has led to a better understanding and appreciation of relatedness, so that these alternatives have, over time, become accepted, both socially and legally, as alternatives to 'family'.

Different contributors to the Carsten's volume *Cultures of Relatedness* (2000) demonstrate how the understanding of relatedness through biology is inadequate for defining relatedness in contemporary society. They 'reject a highly formal analysis, emphasising local practices and discourses of relatedness, and demonstrating how these impinge on and transform each other' (Ibid.:14). A classic case in Carsten's work is one in which a terminally ill patient, lying in a coma, had his sperm taken from him and placed in a sperm bank. There was a heated debate when his widow wanted to be artificially inseminated with the sperm of her dead husband. This is because the idea of a man 'conceiving' a baby posthumously contradicts our everyday understanding of how people make babies. What would the relationship between the baby and the dead man be? How do we explain the nature of the relationship that exists between a child that was adopted at infancy with that of her biological kin? Do they feel related? These developments in reproductive medicine: sperm and egg donation, surrogacy, in-vitro fertilisation and cloning have shaken 'our most fundamental assumptions about kinship as a domain in which relationships are given rather than produced through technological intervention' (Carsten 2004: 163). Such studies demonstrate, without discrediting marriage, how other developments are competing with marriage in the social arena. The new bio-medical techniques are relevant as they question the natural ways of relatedness. This strengthens the argument that cohabitation can and should be studied independent of marriage.

2.9 Conclusion

The argument is that though marriage and blood relations are important in the understanding of how families are formulated and relations defined, other ways of becoming related have emerged. New developments question blood and marital relations and the fragility of marriage is reflected in the high rates of divorce and the growth of alternatives.

The rising number of divorces worldwide epitomise how even relations based on marriage are vulnerable. In her 2004 publication, Carsten demonstrates the complexities of relatedness. She argues that though it is true that kinship is 'part of the given, natural order of things,' it is also true that relatedness is 'shaped by human engagements' (2004: 6). She further explains that kinship may be viewed as something that is determined at birth and is unchangeable; or, it may be seen as something shaped by the ordinary, everyday activities of family life, as well as the scientific endeavours of geneticists and clinicians involved in fertility treatment or prenatal medicine (*Ibid*.).

Carsten then concludes that such works demonstrate that kinship is no longer a given that is defined through 'natural' or 'biological' facts. She questions the traditional assumptions in kinship studies that took as a starting point for understanding relationships that 'sexual procreation was universally perceived as the basis of kinship' (*Ibid*.: 164). The advances in medical technology have become strong alternatives to or substitutes for procreation through sex.

This work does not disregard the relevance of marriage in anyway, but calls for a more objective discussion of other relationships. Non-marital unions run the risk of being marginalised, ignored, and problematised. Yet, there is a historical and cultural record of cohabitation that may tell us much about the strength of marital ideology. Therefore, this work argues that such an approach has led to the glossing over issues that might have led to different conclusions about cohabitation in Botswana.

The next chapter explores methodological nuptialism and fieldwork, highlighting how the 'individual,' a researcher, is part of the data that they collect and analyse.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 CHALLENGING METHODOLOGICAL NUPTIALISM IN RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore how and why methodological nuptialism relates to and possibly affects ethnographic methodology. The question is whether and how underlying assumptions about a particular social relationship between people – in this case (marital) relations and a social ideology that prescribes marriage as a moral prerogative – impact on the ethnographic methodology, and if so, what happens? Whereas the ethnographic methodology places people in their everyday contexts and gathers data on the basis of a prolonged and extensive exposure of the researcher to these lived-in worlds, it involves, in particular, in-depth interviewing, participant observation, focus group discussions and similar qualitative research techniques.

In each of these techniques, underlying and taken-for-granted assumptions on the marital status of people and on the presence of an ideology of marriage can be present. In each of the ethnographic research techniques the 'I' of the researcher is present; the identity of the researcher counts and the researcher takes part in inter-subjective exchanges with his or her interlocutors. Therefore, methodological nuptialism may easily infuse the questions the researcher is asking, the observations that he or she is doing, the conversations he or she takes part in and the focus groups that he or she initiates. Literature (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington 2008; Dauphine 2010; Hayano 1979; Butz & Basio 2004; Maanen 2011; Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011) on ethnographic methodology demonstrates that there is never a 'neutral' and 'objective' hearing and seeing by the researcher, as all 'hearing' and 'seeing' is culturally informed. We have learned to see and hear things in a particular fashion and all hearing and seeing is 'filtered' through the cultural, economic, social spheres that researchers

have been part of, or that have influenced the researcher's upbringing, education and social formation. In fact, the whole body of knowledge accumulated in social research is a product of individuals and how they collect and analyse their data. How does an individual researcher affect the data collected? To what extent have anthropologists (as individuals and, ultimately, collectively) shaped the study and knowledge base on relationships accumulated so far? How researchers have been socialised will, to a large extent, influence the type of topics and the formulation of the research questions and any other questions they ask. How agents of change such as Christianity and colonialism have shaped researchers' works affects the knowledge and structure of social research. This, then, calls for a brief consideration of methodological individualism.

3.2 Methodological individualism

Methodological individualism as an agent-centred social explanation acknowledges that an individual has the potential to shape society in a given direction. For instance, in an economic situation, the supply of goods will largely be determined by the choices of individuals who use their money to buy. Arrow (1994) acknowledges the effects of the individual in the world of economics as '[…] a touchstone of all economics that all explanations must run in terms of the actions and reactions of individuals. […] each individual makes decisions to consume different commodities, to work at one job or another, to choose production methods, to save and invest' (1994: 1). Elster defines methodological individualism as '[…] the doctrine that all social phenomena (their structure and their change) are in principle explicable only in terms of individuals-their properties, goals and beliefs' (1982: 45). Watkins advises that social explanations should be framed 'in terms of individuals and their situations' (1957: 15). Hence, in the perspective of methodological individualism, every human change is produced by the contribution of individuals.

Methodological individualism takes as a paradigmatic point of departure the individual agent and prescribes that researchers study every social phenomenon as if it is derived from individual actions. Collective, group-based behaviour in a sense results from individuals, their actions, their perceptions and their expectations. On the point of contributions that individuals make in the overall changes that take place in society, Agassi observes that, 'only individuals have aims and interests […] the individual behaves in a way adequate to his aim given his circumstances […] the social set up is changeable as a result of individual action' (1960: 244).

The understanding of the influence of the individual in social change or consumer patterns will lead to an appreciation of how the individual researcher contributes to the overall data and knowledge base, therefore it is important to understand 'who' this individual is. Who shapes and defines relationships? Methodological nuptialism on the other hand questions the 'neutrality' of the researcher/observer position while studying relationships. It acknowledges that so much in our upbringing and socialisation has shaped our thinking about relationships. For example, we often assume that individuals marry, that societies perceive of relationships often in the way they relate to or deviate from marriage, and that there is an institutional history of the practice of marriage that has led to its formalisation in particular ways. In addition, while we must acknowledge that, in qualitative research methodologies such as ethnography, some form of underlying methodological nuptialism may have been present in the study of African societies, this chapter will also note that in more quantitative methodologies (i.e. questionnaires, census-taking, statistical data-gathering) methodological nuptialism may have been equally influential. Much of the work on cohabitation as part of demographic analyses of relational patterns in African societies seems to have been imbued with methodological nuptialism, in the sense that its quantitative data-gathering seems to have had great difficulty in statistically incorporating data on non-marital relational patterns.

This chapter explores methodological nuptialism in the context of ethnographic study at two levels: methodological nuptialism in research techniques and methodological nuptialism in auto-ethnography.

Firstly, the chapter interrogates and explores how and why methodological nuptialism can be seen to potentially present itself in some of the qualitative research techniques that can be used in actual fieldwork settings. Here, the chapter runs through the techniques that have been used in this particular study of cohabitation in Botswana and will identify where nuptialism is present in the conducting of interviews, focus groups and observations, thus shaping the answers and observations in a particular, if not biased manner. I became aware of the possibility of bias while using these research techniques. This sensitised me to the fact that methodological nuptialism presents itself easily but it also difficult to avoid.

Second, it questions and explores how methodological nuptialism is part of and present in my auto-ethnography; the ethnography of 'myself' as a researcher and observer placed in a study of a variety of forms of relationships. The important social powers and institutions that are part of the formation of relationships imbue methodological nuptialism with power and authority, at the same time forcing that I, a Motswana researcher, cannot immediately escape. Hence, while methodological nuptialism might be present in the way I have been perceiving and investigating the lives of my interlocutors, the same may have been present in the way these interlocutors came to explore and understand my identity. In my auto-ethnography, it became crucial to ask why and how methodological nuptialism presented itself vis-à-vis my own identity, my training, socialisation and social position.

In conclusion, this chapter highlights the extent to which ethnography and auto-ethnography can never isolate or insulate themselves vis-à-vis the (institutional) powers and histories that determine the understanding and development of relationships in society. Methodological nuptialism is embedded as an element of power and control, much as

ethnography is also part of the production of a particular kind of authority; an ethnographic authority that, however, must be analysed regarding the extent to which it enforces particular views of particular relationships on its interlocutors. A greater awareness of this possible 'side-effect' of the ethnographic method is what methodological nuptialism can highlight as well as challenge.

As already hinted above, taking marriage as a starting point in research is a challenge in the nature of the data that we collect, of what we 'see' and the nature of questions that we ask in the field. Of course, there has been a challenge raised by other scholars regarding how neutral a researcher can be, since subjectivity already starts with the questions formulated and the research approach adopted (Dauphine 2010; Hayano 1979; Bagley 2009; Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). This methodological nuptialism may be embedded in the mindset of the researcher, in academia, and the general public alike.

In the next section, I discuss the main research approach adopted for the study and how methodological nuptialism is inherent in the different approaches to the study of human sexual relations.

3.3 Methodological nuptialism in research techniques

This study is largely ethnographic. Creswell (2009) defines ethnography as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting primary, observational and interview data. Some scholars (Maanen 2011; Creswell 2009; Carl 2009) have described the features characteristic of ethnographic research. Such features include participant observation, context-sensitivity and socio-cultural description. As a participant observer, an ethnographer should create an 'up-close' involvement in some form of participant role, in the natural 'everyday' setting of the informants. This has the benefit that the informants, over time, gain trust in the

researcher. Once trust is gained then information is offered in confidence. For instance, I had an informant who gave me two life histories, both interesting and 'valid'.

I had been working with Nkokonyane[8] as one of my cohabiting informants since the beginning of my fieldwork. She initially told me that she was once a dedicated member of the Assemblies of God church. At church, they were taught and encouraged to abstain from sex until marriage. However, as was the culture among the youths in her church, she also started what they called a courtship, though she admitted that they ended up abusing 'courtship' and started dating instead. The guy she was in courtship with later wanted to have sex with her. However, since as church-mates they had agreed to courtship[9], she refused. The guy became impatient and later married someone else from the church. She really loved this guy and was terribly hurt. She vowed that, from then on, she would not lose a man on the basis of abstinence. She was disappointed. Later, she met a guy outside church. She fell pregnant and she was '*borrowed*' and moved in with what was now her current partner. The term 'borrowed' means she was involved in a particular form of cohabitation (that I will return to later), that means there is a level of parental engagement in the relationship's arrangements. This was the first version of the story that Nkokonyane told me.

My research also included the parents, aunts and uncles of co-habiting couples as informants. So, I made an appointment with Nkokonyane to see her mother. This appointment failed a couple of times and, on the day I thought it was going to finally happen, she called me just before I was due to leave and said, 'can you please pass by my place first because there is something you need to know before you go and see my mother.' So, I went to see her and then she told me another version of her life. The first words she spoke were

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[8] All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms. No picture has been included in the text due to the sensitive nature of the subject

[9] Courtship refers to a Christian courtship. This is a mutual commitment made between a man and a woman to meet regularly for the purpose of knowing each other better and seeking God's will with the aim of marriage one day if it is His divine will.

'*kana mme ga a nkitse*' which meaning 'my mother doesn't know me'. (Well, that was a tough one, I thought!). She meant that she does not have a meaningful relationship with her mother. She explained:

> My parents separated when I was still very young and I stayed with my father. My father left me in the custody of his mother and sister (my grandmother and aunt, respectively). My grandmother was old and my aunt had her own children to take care of. So, I just grew up with no one really concerned about my welfare. I was just a kid there in the family. Nobody really cared about me and what I did. So, when I was doing my senior secondary education at St Joseph's College, I met a certain man who was a teacher and also from Molepolole. Because I was now involved in all these love affairs I did not do well at school. He got this plot and built this house (pointing at a hut in the compound). So, when I came from National Service,[10] I was already pregnant with his child. After I fell pregnant my parents did not even bother to take the initiative to contact the man's family as is the usual practice. '*Ga ba ya go bega tshenyo.*' That is, they never reported the pregnancy, as was culturally expected. My partner and I were so much in love that I moved in with him. When I started cohabiting with this man, they knew where I was staying. Nobody asked and I said little. After this, I did not get a good job or go for further education. Since I now had a baby to take care of and a certificate with bad results, this man started seeing another woman, and literally moved in to stay with her and he left me. What hurt the most is that they live just here, she pointed at their home. When the child was older, I went to a driving school and later got a job as a driver with the local council. So, I then met my current partner. We have a child together. After he lost his job we decided that he should come and stay with me.

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[10] A government programme in which students serve in the government for one year after completing secondary education and before going into tertiary education.

Why did Nkokonyane create the first version? The first version certainly feeds into the ideology that marriage is the ideal and that any other relationship, is by default, wrong. This is how rich the ethnographic approach is; the advantage being that I took a long time in the field and thereby interacted with more than just the individuals cohabiting. She had realised that if I were to see her mother their accounts would not tally. I was now in a dilemma about which version to use. Indeed, these two versions from the same person became important. These two lives of the same informant reflect the social and cultural ideology that societal understanding of relationships starts from the point of view of marriage. The ideology is so embedded in everyday life experiences of people that Nkokonyane was prepared to create 'data' that would fit into the general understanding of how relationships ought to be and avoid presenting herself as a 'bad girl', especially in the presence of a married researcher. Thus, in my exchange with her, nuptialism is assumed to be a shared ideology and as a point of departure for understanding what she was trying to tell me about how to understand her social position. She starts reasoning her responses from the assumption that marriage is the ideal relationship, mirroring the fact that I did not and could not hide being married and thus potentially harbouring particular views on cohabitation. As we went deeper with our in-depth interviews she continually and strenuously tried to justify why she is cohabiting instead of being married.

The ethnographic technique therefore not only allows for 'thick' data to be collected, but it also allows the researcher to move away from the dangers of methodological nuptialism. This narrative demonstrates the significance of the 'who' and 'how', while the 'I' colours the data we collect both as researchers and informants. Firstly, she created an image of herself as a typical born-again Christian who had been betrayed by the church, an image that she wanted to give to the researcher. Later, she gave another image, again of a victim of social injustices. This emphasises the quality of data that the ethnographic approach yields

and how methodological nuptialism in the interaction may potentially affect the data that is gathered; if not approached carefully, the researcher may create a context in which the questions raised may seem to imply a 'normalcy', that take being married for granted. On the part of the researched, there may be an assumption that the researcher expects him or her to be married, creating a level of social desirability in the answers given that does not correspond with reality.

Such data cannot be yielded from a national census, one-time interviews, and focus group discussions, but only through a prolonged in-depth ethnographic study. Moreover, taking marriage as a starting point and assuming that cohabitation is an individual affair would have left me at the first life story, and would not have produced the second version, which was more authentic. The ethnographer is the focal instrument in the collection of data from the people, the actors/insiders. Therefore, the assumptions and perceptions that they bring informs what they see and hear (Miller, Manning & Maanen 1995: 6). The nature of perceptions and assumptions that the researcher brings to the field influence, to a large extent, the data that they collect from the field.

A study on relationships that adopts methodological nuptialism is also in danger of excluding parents from the research sample. That is, methodological nuptialism indicates the danger that relationships are studied by starting from the perspective of relationships that are formed by one man and one woman. This study points out that the formation of relationships draws in more people and different versions of unions. My decision to include the parents of cohabitees was important at two levels: firstly, it provided a validation of the data. The data was validated by the couple themselves and each partner individually; then, the mother or father validated the same data, as did uncles or aunts when possible. This produced insights that require further investigation. Most cohabitants in my field sample were from single-

parent, female-headed households. Hence, a further research question should be studied is whether there is a relationship between being a single mother and cohabitation.

Creswell has also observed that research in ethnography is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field (Creswell 2009: 13). Thus, I had to be flexible in the field in a number of ways.

As I entered the field, I had to make some changes to my initial proposal; for instance, I had initially selected four wards, but when I got into the field I had to reduce those to two. Schapera (1938) defines a ward among Batswana as:

> [A] number of family-groups, living together in the same village or part of a village […] collection of households living together in their own hamlet, and forming a distinct social and political unit under the leadership and authority of an hereditary headman (*kgosana, mong a motse, mong a kgotla*) (Schapera 1938: 19).

I had noticed that cohabiting unions are not homogenous, therefore I decided to focus on two wards in order to devote more time to a limited geographical area. This allowed me to develop an intensive acquaintance with my informants. I had also planned to have focus group discussions later in the process, but when I got into the field I encountered widespread negative perceptions towards cohabitation. For instance, my initial informants knew that specific couples were living together, but refused to say more lest they were accused of describing other people as 'cohabiting'. Here, the problem of labeling arises. Labelling theory is the theory of how the self-identity and behaviour of individuals may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them (Becker 1973; Raybeck 1988). It is associated with the concepts of self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotyping (Guyll et al. 2010). Becker explains how groups create deviance:

[...] social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction creates deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by other of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label (Becker 1973: 9).

One informant, hesitant to tell me about a couple she knew was cohabiting, asked me, '*o tla re o utlwile ka mang*' [if I tell you], *will you disclose that I told you?* This reluctance is a result of the general attitude towards cohabitation in society, especially by those who are not cohabiting, that cohabitation is bad; therefore, no one wants to be viewed as describing other people's relationships in that manner. Therefore if the researcher does not take care such moral views on relationships may feed into the methodological nuptialism as a potential danger

The general perception that only marriage is the ideal relationship affects the information people are generally ready to share. For instance, had I been interested in married couples, I would have had no shortage of people willing to show or even take me to the household of a married couple and the married couple in question would not be offended by the action. I realised that given the negative perceptions about cohabitation, it would be challenging to identify cohabiting couples. I therefore decided to change my approach and start with the focus group discussions then make a follow-up and identify the couples that are cohabiting. I made this decision having realised that though people were aware of cohabiting couples they were uncomfortable about telling me and were afraid of being perceived as the ones who had described people as 'cohabiting'. Changing the timing of my focus group discussions helped, because it allowed me to personally identify the initial informants and,

through the snowball process (Creswell 2009; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell 2005), I got in touch with other couples. Snowballing 'yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest,' (Biernack & Waldorf 1981: 141). As will be examined in the next section, part of the problem of stigma about cohabitation may have resulted from my own position in the process.

3.4. Methodological nuptialism in auto-ethnography

A researcher is part of the data that they collect. So, as a researcher, I also had to deal with methodological nuptialism at a personal level. That is auto-ethnography, a 'research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalised style, drawing on his or her experiences to extend the understanding about a social phenomenon' (Wall 2006: 1). My immediate social circle of educated, middle-class women, working in public service, members of a Pentecostal church and married, did not insulate me against particular moral perceptions of cohabitation. With this personal background, I wondered how my informants would view me. I asked myself a number of questions, such as whether my personality would interfere with my data. I contemplated the idea of taking off my wedding band, in case it influenced my informants' perception of me. But wondered whether it be fair to obtain information effectively under false pretences; besides, how long should I keep it off? One year of fieldwork was too long; the truth always comes out, and I didn't want it to come out the wrong way. So, I kept my ring. My fears were confirmed when, on numerous occasions, especially at the start of the fieldwork questions were always raised about why a married woman would want to know about cohabitation. There were also particular class-based expectations that I had to negotiate. That I was married and also a government employee could be construed as factors against cohabitation. However, the fact that I stayed in the

ward for a length of time while conducting my fieldwork helped to change such perceptions. Generally, in Molepolole, certain expectations are commonly placed on a married woman, notably, not to mingle with women who are not married. A married woman is expected to dress, talk or generally behave in a particular way. And certain attitudes are imposed on a married woman that does not apply to a single woman. I negotiated such challenges by staying in the ward in which I was doing my fieldwork and interacting more with my informants.

During the focus group discussions, my initial question were always, 'what do you think is the ideal male-female relationship?' This is not a neutral question because it assumes that there is indeed an ideal relationship. The married participants in the groups approved of this particular question precisely because marriage was seen by many as the ideal. The fact that I am married already seemed to produce preconceptions about what my informants thought I would want to hear from them. That is, they wanted to give an answer that would concur with what a married woman would likely see as the ideal male-female relationship. At first, this could become confrontational when discussing other sexual unions that exist in society. Such a negative picture had been created that during a combined male-female focus group of ages 30–40 in the Ward A, a cohabiting mother said, 'please, when we talk about such relationships let us remember that some of us are in such relationships. You are hurting us. Anyway, I am happy because I am soon getting married.'

When I then retreated into my room, and started listening to the voice recorder and getting a sense of the direction that the discussions were taking, I asked myself, why didn't I pick up on this comment and redirect the discussions to be more sensitive? Did I let the conversation take this course because I am married? May be unconsciously. My questioning came across as being judgemental about other people's relationships. This was methodological nuptialism slipping into my questions.

I had to explain at length to my interlocutors that I simply wanted to understand cohabitation from their perspective. During one focus group discussion, the question of why, as a married woman, I was interested in cohabiting unions raised rather forcefully. I realised that I could explain to the group that, though married, I relate very well to cohabitation personally, since I know somebody very close that has been in a cohabitating union. I elaborated on how this person had to fight a legal battle so that her children could inherit their dues following the death of their father. Since this reflects how, in the formal structures of society, laws are biased against cohabitation (i.e. Dutch Roman Law and colonial law). I managed to create a better position for an understanding of my work among my interlocutors. Botswana laws support marriage as opposed to other relationships; consequently, individuals in cohabiting unions are not legally protected (Mokomane 2005b; Molokomme 1991). At this point, becoming more reflexive in my auto-ethnography and creating a shared understanding of the significance of my topic helped to establish a better rapport.

3.5 Methodological nuptialism and literature

The approach that a researcher takes is also affected by what they get from their reading. Early anthropology in Botswana, epitomised by Schapera, related the rise of non-marital relationships to migration and modernisation. One of the conclusions drawn from migration and modernisation is that the youth has become independent of both parental authority and culture (Schapera 1939; Kuper 1970; Matthews 1940). Modernisation has been linked to the economic and socio-cultural alienation of the youth. This approach has led to a face-value approach in the study of cohabitation that places a decision to cohabit outside the arrangement of the family (Mokomane 2005a). When Mokomane (1991) discussed the 'formation of cohabiting unions in Botswana' she adopted the terms developed by Sassler and Jobe (2002) for the United States, where the 'time they had been courting before moving

in together' was used to discuss the formation of cohabiting unions. In doing so, she overlooked the observation that Molokomme (1991) made that love relationships in Botswana are a private affair until a major development takes place. The crucial point in the formation of cohabiting unions is not necessarily the time spent together before moving in (Sassler 2004), but a 'major' development and exactly what happens after this major development and how. For example, after a couple falls pregnant negotiation about cohabitation takes place. I asked cohabitants to reflect on how they came to stay together, without giving them any directions, and they revealed that, in most cases, pregnancy was the starting point of the formation of the union, not necessarily the time spent together. The approach that focuses on time, as used in studies in the US, excludes parents on the assumption that cohabitation is an individual affair. This exclusion of parents in the formation of cohabiting unions is exacerbated by the assumption that parents can only be involved in the establishment of socially accepted unions like marriage, not cohabitation. However, where cohabitation is seen as a potential phase before marriage, parents are often involved in its formation.

Though Mokomane (2005b) has pointed out that cohabitation in Botswana is not a threat to marriage but a prelude, she did not, however, interrogate the involvement of parents, especially on the practice of *kadimo*, the borrowing of a woman in anticipation of marriage. She argues that:

> Families can also facilitate cohabitation through a practice known as *kadimo* or *go adima mosadi*, literally meaning 'to borrow a woman'. This entails discussions between the couples' families where the boy's family 'borrows' the girl. Hence the couple's family (at least, the nuclear families) is involved in the establishment of the union. In a number of cases respondents reported that the male partner and/or his

parents had gone to the women's parents to seek permission from them for her to live with him. Almost invariably, the discussions and agreement between the parents were reported to have been informal and, although in some cases the intention of eventually marrying the woman was informally communicated, the majority of the discussions did not express, at least explicitly, any marriage intentions (Mokomane 2005b: 208).

The inherent idea that cohabitation is an individual affair deterred her from adequately explaining the *kadimo* practice. In fact, she does not explain what the practice of *kadimo* is. Is it a marital or a non-marital relationship? Adopting the view that cohabitation is outside the communal or familial arrangement impedes the understanding that *kadimo* is a form of cohabitation, because no *patlo* has taken place. However, the approach that assumes that parents can only engage in negotiations about marriage but not cohabitation also clouds her ability to adequately deal with the *kadimo* practice. K*adimo* is a type of cohabitation that involves parents, who acknowledge and recognise the union as potentially leading to marriage (although it may never reach that stage). An important element here is that the process of getting married can take a long time, in some cases years, meaning that marriage primarily must be seen as a process and not as an end state. Van Dijk (2012) demonstrates that marriages in Molepolole can take a long time because of the high costs of involved and the extent of responsibilities and the complexities of the organisation of weddings. Yet, in this in-between period, before finally getting married, couples can have a different status to those in a cohabiting arrangement, which as Mokomane indicates, may never lead to marriage. In both cases, however, the parents and other family elders are involved.

Studies of Christianity and marriage also suffer from methodological nuptialism since they take marriage as a starting point. Falen (2008) carried out a study in Benin on polygyny and marriage in Christianity. His main objectives were to demonstrate how the assumptions

that Christian marriage are necessarily monogamous has led to anthropology overlooking polygyny in Christianity and also how the claim that women necessarily prefer monogamy is not always true. He concludes from his study that because of such claims about Christian marriages being exclusively monogamous 'Christianity's relationship to polygyny is virtually untouched in contemporary ethnographic accounts' (Falen 2008: 52). He first acknowledges that claims of Christian monogamous marriages are real and 'accurately reflects the views of many Beninois.' He discovered, however, that most people's actions and ideas cannot be predicated neatly. Through his study of Christian marriages in Benin, Falen demonstrates that the starting point in research and writing that takes Christian marriages as necessarily monogamous has led to a general neglect of Christianity and polygyny in ethnographic studies. He demonstrates an acceptance of polygyny in Christian churches through the study of African Independent Churches in Benin. He acknowledges that 'most Christian denominations reject polygyny and criticise polygyny-permissive denominations' (*Ibid*.: 56). However, in his studies, he found that though monogamy is the ideal Christian marriage preference in Benin and other countries such as Ghana, some congregations in Benin actually accept polygyny. He cites the *Musama* Disco Christo Church in Ghana as an example. The Musama Disco Christo Church's declaration of faith statement in part reads 'we (as an African Independent Church) believe polygamy is not a mortal sin.' He found that literature from the Celestial Church of Christ, states that 'we accept into the heart of our religion both monogamous and polygamous individuals' (*Ibid*.: 61). Through the study of these churches, Falen shows how taking for granted that Christian marriages are always monogamous has led to researchers not conducting studies that look into polygyny in the Christian church, hence the subject has been ignored in ethnographic studies.

The other objective of Falen's study was to demonstrate how the claim that women necessarily prefer monogamous relationships is not always true. After discussing literature

that evaluates monogamous and polygynous relationships from both cultural and Christian perspectives, and carrying out ethnographic studies among Christian women in Benin, Falen concludes that not all women exclude themselves from non-monogamous relationships. He cites a number of reasons why some Christian women embark on non-monogamous unions: the first reason is that the demographic composition of Christian membership is such that women outnumber men; some women seek financial assistance from married men; some women desire a more flexible arrangement than monogamy allows. This results in some Christian women becoming involved in non-monogamous and informal unions with married men. Falen suggests that 'many women, especially the educated Christians, prefer monogamous marriages, but some accept becoming co-wives for financial reasons' (*Ibid.*).

I have used Mokomane's study to illustrate how taking marriage as a starting point leads to a limited understanding of cohabitation. Falen (2008) demonstrates how the claim about Christian marriages as necessarily monogamous has led to few studies focusing on polygyny and Christianity, and also how the claim that women are necessarily monogamous has also led to researchers ignoring the study of Christian women in non-monogamous relationships.

3.6 Selection of cohabiting informants

In order to be able to identify and select cohabiting informants, I decided to organise focus groups that would put me in contact with people who could provide me with information pertaining to cohabitation. I had a total of nine focus group discussions: four groups of males and females selected on the basis class and educational level.

During the focus group discussions, I kept a record card for each member of the group. I recorded personal information about each participant in the group. In addition, I also made observations of the individual participants during the focus group meetings, noting that

those who were more vocal and forthcoming with information were the most likely candidates to discuss the subject further. I then studied each record card, focusing on the biographical information of the participant. This allowed me to make a selection for further interaction. The card was intended to assist in the selection of those individuals who were more likely to be cohabiting, i.e. relevant subjects for my research. Two questions required participants to indicate the number of children they had and whether the participant was living with their parents or not. A positive response to both of these questions could suggest that the individual might be in some kind of a sexual relationship, and, if not married, then cohabitation was probable. From these focus group discussions, I identified cohabiting couples. From these couples, I was then able to make contact with other cohabitants who were not initially part of the focus group discussions. This is the snowball effect. The snowballing technique allowed me to meet a total of 25 couples, creating an interaction with 50 persons in discussing matters pertaining to their relationship. In addition to the couples I also contacted each parents (mothers, fathers aunts and uncles) at least one parent per a cohabiting individual. This group gave a total of 77 more individuals. Where consent was granted I used a voice recorder to record the interviews as this would easily allow for direct quotations of what my interlocutors said. In other cases, notes were taken from the interviews which were then used in producing a report of the interview. Furthermore, I kept a field diary in which I recorded what I observed, what happened and what was said during informal conversations and interactions between me and my field participants. From the diary, entries were made into texts then coded for meaning. Digital files of interviews, observations, notes and pointers were kept at in box files in my office

3.7 Fieldwork experiences

I spent a total of 14 months doing fieldwork in Molepolole (12 consecutive months and two months as follow-up and validation period) doing focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and participant observations. I spent time with my cohabiting informants, their parents, aunts and uncles in their respective homes, at cattle posts and *masimo*/lands and attending their social activities like baby showers, bridal showers, ceremonies marking the end of the confinement period for nursing mothers, weddings, funerals and sharing, in particular, evening meals with them. I rented a room with a family in Ward B, one of the two wards in which I conducted my study. This enabled me to be in the same environment as my informants and allowed me to observe how couples relate with each other, how they interact with each other's parents and relatives and the extent to which they are involved in and recognised or accepted by the other's family. This was an important observation since I could discern the latent but salient differences within heterogeneous cohabiting unions and between cohabiting unions and marriage. As explained in Creswell (2009), an ethnographic approach 'is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field setting.'

One such 'reality' was when I had dinner with one couple, whom I call Agang and her partner Thero. Usually on such occasions, I would buy meat, vegetables and something to drink as my contribution towards the dinner. I would also help the lady of the house with the preparation of dinner. This created a relaxed atmosphere in which information was freely given. When we were eating, I commended Agang on her good cooking. She responded that, 'it's only unfortunate that my partner does not see that as good enough to marry me. I have even stopped cleaning the yard. I used to keep it spotlessly clean to impress him. I have given up.' The man interjected that this was not a fair comment, since Agang knew that negotiations could not start because his father was away. This shocked me because, during

our previous interview, he had said that his father was dead and his uncles were reluctant to enter into marriage negotiations on his behalf. I asked him about it. He explained that his father[11] might as well be dead, because he has never been part of his life and now he is hindering his marriage. I asked them why they had moved in together before marriage. They explained that since his father was not available to facilitate the negotiations, he wanted Agang to help him de-bush the new plot that he had been allocated by the Land Board. So, his aunt went to Agang's relatives to ask her to come and de-bush the residential plot.

Such insights into the lives of individuals are unleashed by ethnographic research. This couple lives on a 40m by 40m plot, in a two-bedroomed house, with a kitchen and sitting room, two thatched huts, one which is a storeroom and the other is a kitchen in which they make fire from firewood. They have also constructed an outdoor cooking area from neatly knitted tree branches, where they cook, especially in summer when it's hot. On this particular evening, we made use of the outdoor cooking area. This couple is relatively happy although they hunger for marriage. Agang clearly expresses her disappointment at not being married. That her partner describes his father as dead expresses his disappointment and the difficulty this causes him in marriage preparations.

However, being a researcher can also be a challenge, especially in culturally sensitive studies like cohabitation, because of its negative social position. The ethical responsibility for the researcher goes beyond the simple statements of informed consent. In view of this study, some informants may have their emotions aroused by some of the questions (as explained above) and some because of the problems they experienced in their cohabiting unions. During a focus group discussion of females aged 30–40 in Lokgwapheng ward, at the end of a session, a lady came to me crying, because she was in a cohabiting union that was abusive. I

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[11] His father is said to be taking care of the cattle of some rich man outside Molepolole, but nobody really knows where exactly. He has been gone for years and the son in question does not even remember the last time he saw his father. But the uncles are afraid that if they go ahead and 'marry' his son, he might come one day and accuse them of taking over his family affairs without his consent.

didn't know what to do. I tried to calm her. I called my supervisor Dr. Nkomazana for advice. I then referred the lady for counselling with the Keletso Counselling Centre in Molepolole.

Overall, my rapport with my interlocutors developed into a good relationship in which trust had been won. At the same time, this relationship places certain expectations on me. For instance, some of my participants would call me to transport a sick mother to hospital, attend funerals and wedding. Such invitations continued to be extended to me even after fieldwork.

In addition, I realised that the question of methodological nuptialism also featured in the qualitative methodology that I applied when contacting the cohabitants, by noticing how their perception of me as the researcher changed over time. Initially during my research, given perceptions of cohabitation as a deviant relationship, I was perceived as someone likely to pass judgement, especially given that I am married. I tackled this by living among my informants and interacting with them on a regular basis. In the process, I gained their trust.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how methodological nuptialism is inherent in the way relationships have been studied. It further discussed the extent to which ethnography and auto-ethnography can never be independent of the institutional powers and histories that determine the understanding and development of relationships in society. Methodological nuptialism is embedded in both ethnography and auto-ethnography as an element of power and control. That is, the way researchers and authors produce knowledge is largely influenced by who they are. Ethnography is part of the production of a particular kind of authority, and the extent to which it enforces views of particular relationships on its interlocutors needs to be analysed. This chapter therefore concludes by observing that there is need for a clearer understanding of how a research methodology may also influence which studies on relationships are confronted with particular ideas about what relationships should look like.

By addressing the way that methodological nuptialism surfaces in the techniques that ethnography applies, we are forced as researchers to make our own (moral, ideological, social) position clear. This helps us to understand the answers and reactions presented by interlocutors, on the one hand, and makes us aware of the positions we as researchers have and represent, on the other. In the next chapter, I explore the effects of Christianity on the anthropological understanding of marriage and family life Molepolole.

4.0 CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE BAKWENA

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the place of the researcher in the final product of any research work produced, how auto-ethnography influences data that the researcher gathers, pointing out how the researcher is not neutral in the processes of doing research and therefore is part of the data that they collect and the conclusions that they make.

This chapter explores the influence of Christianity on Batswana family life. This will be done with particular reference to marriage and *bogadi* and how the interaction between Christian and Setswana culture led to modifications in the family life of Batswana. Indeed, I posit that this interaction may have contributed to the rise in cohabiting unions.

In chapter 1, I discussed various factors that have led to changes in the family and marriage in Africa. This chapter will re-visit the Christian influence on the lives of Batswana in general and the Bakwena in particular. This is done in order to demonstrate how, historically, Christianity has had a direct impact on the lives of the people of Molepolole, where the study was carried out.

This chapter starts by giving a description of the place and people where the study was conducted. It then discusses the changes that have taken place, over time, in the social meaning of marriage, changes that have taken place specifically in the processes and procedures concerning *bogadi*, in order to demonstrate how these changes led to a fixed perception about what marriage is. That is, by re-labelling unions like polygamy, levirate marriages – unions that were customarily perceived as marriage – as 'unrecognised' and morally unacceptable (Schapera 1987, 1958) social unions, I will argue that Christianity contributed to the rise of non-marital cohabitation. By implication, Christianity contributed to

the number of people who were not married. The backdrop of this chapter is the observation by many scholars (Matthews 1940; Evans-Prichard 1989; Bledsoe 1990; Schapera 1939) on family life in Africa that, traditionally, it was one in which 'there was no such thing as an unmarried adult woman' (Bledsoe 1990: 117). This point is also articulated by Matthews when he explains the universality of marriage in Southern Africa. He explains that marriage was 'looked upon as a sacred duty to one's family to marry [...] those who do enter upon this state [...] enjoy a considerable prestige' (1940: 6). Mair further explains that those who did not participate in marriage were considered failures and the stigma associated with failure was attached not only to the individuals concerned, but also their families (Mair 1969). The question that this chapter grapples with is how has Christianity contributed to a situation in contemporary Botswana where marriage seems to be an exception rather than a rule, as reflected in the rise of cohabiting unions and the declining marriage rate. The last three censuses in Botswana reflect how few people are actually married compared to those who are single. This shows that, though society still perceives marriage as the norm, statistically it is actually an exception.

We do not have any significant statistical evidence of the reality of marriage that is nationally representative until the 1991 national census (Government of Botswana 1991). Though it was the norm, it was clear that not everybody could marry, even in the years before the arrival missionaries. The implication of polygamous marriages, where some men have more than one wife, is that other men will have none. The missionary resistance to polygamy must be understood not only from the theological perspective of the New Testament, but from a demographic perspective as well. The missionaries were worried about these young men and their social position who might have been disgruntled and disenfranchised since they were not in a position to start a family because of the polygamy of elderly or more powerful men.

This chapter explores the conditions that led to the creation of monogamous marriage as the ideal in Southern Africa, and other adult unions being considered deviant and non-marital. This resulted in scholarly research and publications in the thirties and forties seemingly taking monogamous marriages as the standard by which all other unions were compared, i.e. methodological nuptialism in the study of relationships. The chapter concludes by discussing how acculturation between the culture of Batswana and Christianity redefined the procedures and timing of the giving of *bogadi* and the moralisation of marriage that advocated for the Christian monogamous marriage. Marriages could take a long time to be concluded and finalised, in part because the *bogadi* payment could a long time to be fully settled – at times the better part of a person's lifetime – this meant that over a long period the marriage remained in a kind of 'halfway' status; i.e. as something that was perpetually 'in the making' (see Solway, 1990; Roberts & Comaroff, 1977; Gulbrandsen, 1986). The Christian missionaries opted for a clear-cut moment when a wedding would be held (Shropshire 1946) and this marriage could be registered in their files, thus ending or reducing a prolonged and indeterminate state for the marital partners. Consequently, the missionaries relegated other traditionally recognised unions to being non-marital and therefore illegitimate in their domains of influence.

This chapter argues that Christianity remained a force in marital relations and in the inspection of relationships throughout modern history. The post-colonial state reinforced missionary and colonial regulations without little interest in returning to its pre-colonial history, thus sticking to a model that remained fundamentally strange to the society.

The question is, how has Christianity also been able to (co-)produce cohabitation at the same time, especially in Molepolole, where missionary Christianity was first established in Botswana? In a sense, Molepolole became an important place, where Christianity engaged

in reshaping marital relationships (Van Dijk 2012; Griffiths 1997) because of the effect it had on marriage.

4.2 Geographical and socio-economic positioning of Molepolole

Before turning to the history of the significance of Christianity in the marital process and its changes, I will situate the place of research − Molepolole − in the context of some (historical and geographical) dimensions that will help us to understand the impact of Christianity more clearly. Molepolole is found in the Kweneng district in Botswana. It is the recent historical village of the Bakwena (Merriweather 1968). The term Bakwena literally means the 'people of the crocodile.' The crocodile has become an important symbol in Molepolole. The crocodile is the totemic animal of the Bakwena. According to the 2011 Population and Housing census report, 'Molepolole still retains its position as the biggest village in Botswana with an estimated population of 63 128' (CSO 2011: 4), coming in third after the two cities of Gaborone and Francistown. Molepolole lies 50 kilometers west of the capital city, Gaborone. The population is largely urban; however, despite its large and modern infrastructure, Molepolole is considered a village since the livelihood of most people still depends on agriculture. Though subsistence farming has been complemented by the cash economy, most of the Bakwena still practice the two farming systems of crop production and animal husbandry. The *masimo (ploughing fields)* and cattle posts are normally located kilometers away from the village. Therefore, though I spent most of my time in the village, I also had to travel to the lands and cattle posts to locate some of my informants, especially the parents, aunts, and uncles of my informants. Some of the crops produced include the local varieties of sorghum, maize, beans, and some delicacies like sweet reeds and water melons. Animal rearing includes mainly cattle and small livestock like goats and sheep. The proximity of Molepolole to the capital city and the level of development in infrastructure,

such as the road network, have contributed to the rapid growth of the village, hence it is more likely to find people who are cohabiting in this village.

The Bakwena settled, in the seventeenth century, in what today is Molepolole after periods of migration. Sillery (1954) acknowledges that the group was not homogenous as there were *bafaladi*,[12] then comprising non-Bakwena among the group. The Bakwena were forced to migrate from one place to another as a result of the war with the Boers and they resettled in the village in the nineteenth century by which time they had been in contact with other groups inhabiting the area. This pattern of migration, contact and inclusion is still reflected today. Although the village is largely comprised of Bakwena, it is not homogeneous and many non-Bakwena are residents. Today, some come voluntarily to apply and settle among the Bakwena, while others come as civil servants and for other different purposes. The proximity of Molepolole to the capital and the city push-factors like high costs of living makes this village an ideal place for people from other parts of the country to settle, away from the city but close enough to enjoy the benefits of city life, like better employment opportunities but low rents. Molepolole displays an interesting mix of architecture, which reflects the changing nature of Botswana society as tradition gradually gives way to a more modern lifestyle. The village boasts a College of Education, an Institute of Health Sciences, a hospital, secondary schools, a police station, land board offices, a Council and a number of clinics and primary schools. It also provides a number of other services: shopping complexes, a good network of tarred and gravel roads, electricity and piped water. This infrastructure demands manpower, which is drawn from all over the country and even abroad. All these developments situate Molepolole as a hub for immigration, rendering the village non-homogenous in terms of population.

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[12] Bafaladi-refers to all foreigners that have been incorporated into the chiefdom (in this case, all non-Bakwena living among the Bakwena)

4.3 The legal system

Molepolole has its own paramount chieftaincy, which played a crucial role in the early phase of the missionisation of the Bakwena. It is necessary, here, to make a few remarks about the legal-pluralistic system that also applies in Molepolole. In fact, a general note on the legal system in Botswana is important for this study as it enables a discussion of why individuals would opt to cohabit, rather than take advantage of the possibility to get married at the age of 21 without parental consent. Botswana operates under a dual legal system of customary and Dutch-Roman Law /civil law (Molokomme 1991; Dow & Kidd 1994).

Under the pluralist system, the paramount chieftaincy is legally entitled to officiate marriages under customary rule and to provide for legal settlement of cases pertaining to, in this case, the Bakwena kinship system and its rulings concerning inheritance and the acknowledgement of offspring. The customary court of the main *kgotla* in Molepolole can pronounce in such cases as divorce, property settlements or the provision of recognition of children (Griffiths 1997). Griffiths observes that there 'is a whole range of relationships that involve procreation […] and that marriages are only in the minority among all such relationships' (1997: 13). This is evidenced by the last census, as discussed above (Mokomane 2005b; Kubanji 2013). Thus, there are different relationships in which children are born: marriage, single parenthood, teenage parenting, cohabitation, etc. However, she further notes that marriage still holds powerful sway at an ideological level. That is, though marriage seems to be declining, it still provides a frame of reference in terms of how individual relationships are characterised, particularly where the law is concerned. The social and legal status of a relationship still largely depends on whether that relationship is a marriage or not. This legal aspect is very important, especially when it comes to the rights of women and children. This is because their socio-legal status and access to inheritance still

largely depends on the marital status of the relationship. It is through marriage that one can inherit from their father or husband, i.e. a mother needs to be married to the father of her children in order to be able to inherit intestate (Molokomme 1991; Dow & Kidd 1994; Mokomane 2005b Molepolole, like any other village in the country, is marked by a patriarchal kinship system where the father's line of descent is very important: inheritance and social positioning are largely determined through the father's line, and women marry into the families of their husbands (Kuper 1970; Matthews 1940).

4.4 Traditional/local administration

The traditional socio-political system in Botswana is centred on a ward system: 'Each ethnic group managed its own affairs under the leadership and authority of a chief' (Schapera 1952: 28). The chief's ward becomes the main ward and he is the senior officer in that ward. From an interview with the then Deputy Chief of Molepolole, I gathered that the village has about 42 wards under the leadership of different headman, who owe their allegiance to the chief. The government of Botswana acknowledges chieftaincy and has incorporated it in the governance of the country through the structure of the House of chiefs thus recognising traditional leadership. The ward system is a way of decentralising power and the management of village affairs. Each ward is headed by a *kgosana* (headman) who is usually related to the chief and directly reports to the chief. According to information obtained from *dikgosana* (the plural of *kgosana*) in the two wards where I carried out my research, every Wednesday all the *dikgosana* converge at the main *kgotla* for reporting purposes and general consultation. The kgotla and dikgosana are important for the arrangement of marriages especially where this concerns the establishment of customary marriages as well as for the transfer of the bride wealth in the form of live cattle. These structures maintain an important role in controlling cattle-transfers

4.5 The development of Christianity in Molepolole and its impact on *bogadi*

Molepolole has a significant historical relationship with Christianity (Sillery 1954; Sales 1971). This makes the village the ideal place to carry out research on religious matters in relation to marriage and cohabitation, as all Christian groups are represented: mainline, Pentecostal and African independent churches. According to the 2001 census, about 70% of Batswana describe themselves as Christian. Christianity is not the only religion practiced in Molepolole, there is also Islam and other traditional religions.

I have decided to focus on Christianity because it is already diverse and it is the religion that has, comparatively, had a great impact on the lives of Batswana. Islam was established in Molepolole in the eighteenth century (Amanze 2002) and today Molepolole has one mosque and one Islamic primary school. However, though there are some Batswana who have converted to Islam, Christianity has had more impact on the community than Islam and other religions due to its historical relationship with the Bakwena chieftaincy.

Christianity, like any other religion, plays a very important role in the lives of its followers, especially in relation to family life. For this reason, I will now discuss the impact that Christianity has had on the culture of Bakwena in particular, with specific reference to the processes and procedures relating to *bogadi*. These changes have taken place due to, among other developments, the introduction of Christianity and its reaction to Setswana culture (Sillery 1954) and specifically on to family life, marriage and *bogadi*.

The first tribal chief in Botswana to convert to Christianity was Sechele I, the Paramount Chief of the Bakwena (Parsons 1997; Sillery 1954; Sales 1971). Merriweather notes that David Livingstone was crucial in the conversion of the chief, 'Livingstone worked among the Bakwena and was instrumental in converting the great chief Sechele 1 into Christianity' (1968: 16). He further notes that the 'Bakwena chiefs had a deep regard of the

church [...] they all had taken an interest in the church's welfare' (*Ibid.*). This reflects the general acceptance of Christianity among the people of Molepolole. In accordance with Christian moral values, *Kgosi Sechele* had to give up his polygamous marriage and so he sent four of his wives to their parents so that he could be baptised into the Christian faith (Sillery 1954; Parsons 1997). Parsons explains that, in 1848:

> Sechele had reached a point where he wished desperately to be baptized into the church, the first among the chiefs of the interior to become a Christian […] the obstacle of polygamy stood firmly in Sechele's path (Parsons 1997: 77).

The action by the chief is an indication of the extent that Christianity permeated the lives of Bakwena and provided a new set of values, especially concerning relationships.

In Lesotho, Murray observed that as missionaries converted Basutho to Christianity, 'polygamy and *bohali* [a Basutho word for *bogadi*] became focal points of ideological contention between the defenders of 'proper Sesotho' and the PEMS'[13] as agents of moral reform (1977: 81; Poulter 1976). This radical change from a variety of socially accepted relationships (polygamy, levirate) to only one type of marriage, the monogamous Christian marriage, led to other previously socially accepted marriages being relegated to the periphery and redefined as non-marital, consequently increasing cohabitation. Relationships that were traditionally regarded as marriages were reduced to mere cohabitation as a result of the ways in which the Christian missionaries understood and perceived *bogadi,* the bride wealth payments, a practice that they believed went against a 'proper' marriage based on love and individual decision-making. For the missionaries, *bogadi* initially meant a loveless wedding practice, almost akin to slavery. This was as serious as the problem they had with polygamy.

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[13] PEMS is a missionary group that worked among the Basotho.

The missionaries saw polygamy as loveless, a form of relationship in which 'natural' affections between husband and wife were absent.

But how was *bogadi* understood in Kwena society at the time Livingstone and later missionaries of the London Missionary Society arrived?

4.6 Changes in the purpose and presentation of *bogadi* among Batswana

Archival information and literature about *bogadi* prior to the introduction of the church and civil registered marriages reflect a close association between *bogadi* and the rights or legitimacy of children and the paternity of the father, and that it only relates indirectly to the validity and establishment of a marriage per se. This is consistent with observations made elsewhere; for instance, Murray notes that the traditional purpose of *bohali* in Lesotho was to socially position the child. This is reflected in a Sesotho idiom '*ngoana ke oa likhomo*', 'cattle begot children' (1977: 64). The following extracts from Botswana National archives, an article entitled 'The Conflict between the Native Customary Law and Civil law in Bechuanaland' reads:

> [B]*bogadi* in the traditional marriage played a less definitive but vital part: its main role was to establish the legal rights of the children […] but it was not only the legal rights of the children that it established, it also transferred rights from the parents of the mother to that of the father. Because of the association with children, it was not an essential part before the marriage could be consummated. The consummation followed parental agreement and consent but *bogadi* was paid at any time from the time when they lived together to the arrival of progeny or even later. It was not even uncommon for a man's daughter's *bogadi* to be passed on to the mother's parents in payment of her *bogadi* (Larson 1970:7)

The above extract illustrates the purpose traditionally served by *bogadi*, prior to the arrival of Christianity. When missionaries introduced Christianity, the approach that they used was that of presenting a conversion to modernity (Van der Veer 1996) and moralising 'heathens'. Missionaries were openly hostile to traditional African forms of culture such as polygamy and bride wealth (Lesthaeghe 1989: 33; Parsons 1997; Cairncross 1974). Murray observes that, among the Basotho, the early missionaries viewed the payment of *bohali* (A Basotho word for *bogadi*) through 'cattle as the epitome of heathenism' (1977: 81). They thought this was buying women through cattle, which was a misinterpretation of how Batswana organised and gave meaning to processes and procedures concerning the establishment of marriage. Christianity required that newly converted Batswana give up certain cultural practices. The missionaries would try to protect the new converts from back-sliding into heathen ways by, among other things, sending the converts to mission stations. This is illustrated by Hutchinson (1957), who states that the missionaries:

> […] established stations in which they could accommodate their pupils, in complete isolation from their tribal environment. The mission stations were instrumental in removing the Christian convert from the influence of his traditional belief and social control (Hutchinson 1957: 162).

Due to a lack of understanding and appreciation of the purpose of the giving of *bogadi*, and based on wrong assumptions, missionaries called for the abolition of some important aspects of Setswana culture, thereby changing some procedures and processes in the giving of *bogadi*. While traditionally what defined a relationship as marriage was the consultations, negotiations and consent between the parents of the man and woman in question, in

contemporary society, *bogadi* has shifted to become a significant marker in the process of establishing a marriage. Primarily, the purpose of *bogadi* was to socially position the children as belonging to their father and his family. Secondly, *bogadi* served to give the father his status as the 'social father' of those children (whether biologically his or not) Murray 1977). In short, many researches and writings (Matthews 1940; Lesthaeghe 1989) on traditional Southern African procedures pertaining to *bogadi* concur that: what determined a union as a marriage was the consultation and consent of both sets of parents; that it was purely a prerogative of the groom and his parents to decide how much and when to give *bogadi*; and that the payment of *bogadi* was not an immediate condition for establishing a union such as marriage. Solway (1990) also observes in relation to the Bakgalakgadi that bride wealth was:

[…] rarely paid early in marriage the process and I have seen it paid after divorce, after the death of the wife and by sons for their mothers. Few would question the marital status of a middle-aged couple if bride wealth was not yet paid, but the rights of their young adult children to their father's agnatic group's support and property might well be issues for debate (Solway 1990: 45).

Matthews (1940) observed among the Barolong that:

[…] the question of *bogadi* is never raised at all during the negotiations preliminary to a marriage. There is no bargaining about the amount of *bogadi*. The negotiations are concerned mainly with obtaining consent of the parents of the girl' (Matthews 1940:13).

When discussing Kgalagari marriages, Kuper (1940) notes that once parents consulted with

each other and agreed that the couple can marry, even before *bogadi* was paid the couple was regarded as married:

> […] a woman for whom *kgobo*[14] has been accepted is not referred to as a mistress or concubine (*nyatsi*) but as a wife […] *bogadi* is paid several years after children have been born to the marriage, *pholo* paid and the family established at the husband's home […] Delays of eight to ten years are common […] in some instances men will pay *bogadi* for their own mothers after the death of their fathers. As one informant put it; *bogadi* shows satisfaction with the wife and buys children. Most informants insist particularly on the 'child-buying' side of *bogari:* 'Its sole purpose is to buy children' (Kuper 1940: 469).

As noted by Solway (1990), in most cases *bogadi* in traditional life was never meant to establish a marriage and it was only within marriage that *bogadi* could be paid:

> [W]hile payment of bride wealth can confirm a marriage it does not always. But it does always legitimise children; it has an effect of defining an individual's social identity and clarifying succession to office and devolution of property (Solway 1990: 45).

The consultation between parents was sufficient to establish marriage, before the giving of *bogadi.* Matthews (1940) also makes similar observations among the Barolong concerning the effects of agencies of acculturation among the Tswana groups. He mentions Christianity and other Bantu tribes as agents of acculturation:

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[14]*Kgobo* refers to a small gift given to a girl by her fiancée after both sets of parents have entered into negotiations and given their consent for the couple to marry. This gift is not *bogadi.*

[…] these foreign elements have introduced among them new conceptions about certain institutions like *bogadi* (bride wealth) e.g. the demand of the full amount of *bogadi* before the consummation of marriage, bargaining about bogadi, the recovery of *bogadi* on the dissolution of the marriage, things which were either unknown among them or regarded as improper (Matthews 1940: 4).

Matthews further observes among the Barolong that, prior to the influence of Christianity, the Barolong left 'to the discretion of the prospective husband the nature and amount of bogadi to be made over' (Matthews 1940: 14). Another area that anthropologists agree on concerning *bogadi* is the observation that *bogadi* was not a subject for negotiation between the parents of the man and those of the woman, but a prerogative of the parents of the man as to when and how much *bogadi* to give (Kuper 1970; Matthews 1940, Schapera 1936, 1940). For instance, Roberts[15] notes that there is no fixed amount of *bogadi*, and it is not subject to negotiation between families. It is a matter to be decided by the man's family alone (Schapera 1936; Kuper 1970; Matthews 1940).

Schapera (1936), Matthews (1940) and Kuper (1970) report the same pattern among the Bakgatla, Barolong and the Bakgalagari, respectively. Their observation is that, in the traditional Tswana system, the amount of *bogadi*, and when to give it, was determined by the groom and it was not to be negotiated with the bride's family. It served the interest of the groom and his family, rather than the establishment of a union as a marriage per se. Until the arrival of Christianity, *bogadi* did not constitute the establishment of marriage. Therefore, the non-payment of *bogadi* did not affect whether a 'marriage' was a relationship consented to by parents. Such a relationship was regarded as marriage, of course with limited rights compared to one in which *bogadi* has been given. The difference lies in the fact that, in a marriage

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[15] Botswana National Archives: BNB 1539 'A Restatement of the Kgatla Law on Domestic Relations' by Simon Roberts.

where *bogadi* has been given, the man enjoys the rights over his children, unlike a man in a marriage where no *bogadi* has been given (Matthews 1940; Kuper 1970). The above discussion reflects what constituted valid traditional Tswana marriage. I continue this discussion below with particular reference to Sekwena marriage before the introduction of Christianity. The point is that before *bogadi* was made a prerequisite for marriage, one could be married socially or legally without the giving of *bogadi*.

Records exist regarding what constituted a valid traditional Tswana marriage before the arrival of Christian Church weddings and the registration of civil marriages. In 1958,[16] a communication between the Government Secretary in Mafikeng and the Divisional Commissioner, South, Lobatsi reveals the following with regard to Sekwena *bogadi*:

> *Bogadi bo tswa morago ga di tumalano tse di kwadilweng fha godimo. Ke gore nako ngwe fela morago le fa e ka nna ga batsaani ba bone bana ba ba bedi gongwe ba bararo. Palo ya bogadi e mo thateng ya motsei ka fa a nonofileng ka teng le ka fha a itlotlang ka teng.*

> *Bogadi* was given after the above agreements have been done. It could be anytime even after the birth of two to three children by the couple. The amount of *bogadi* was entirely upon the groom, depending on his financial capabilities and self-respect] (Botswana National Archives BNB SP/N/1/C Subject: Laws and Customs of Bakwena[17]).

Consistent with what prevails in other Setswana speaking tribes, the payment or non-payment of *bogadi* did not affect the status of a marriage or other form of union as long as couples'

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[16] Botswana National Archives BNB SP/N/1/C Subject: Laws and customs of Bakwena. These laws and customs were prepared in 1947 by a committee of headmen appointed by Chief Kgari.

[17] This document of the Laws and Customs of Bakwena was compiled by a committee of headman in view of the fact that the Bakwena culture was disappearing. So this was an effort to record and preserve the culture of the people. This group of headman define what was traditionally understood as a *Sekwena* marriage

parents had given their consent.

In a communication of 5 November 1951, between Mackenzie[18] and the Government Secretary, Mackenzie writes:

> The two essentials of a Native marriage were the consent of parents and *bogadi*. Before Western contact, it was rather more than a mere consent of parents that was necessary, it was in fact, a contractual agreement between the parents of the spouses (Mackenzie 1951).

Mackenzie here suggests that before the arrival of Westerners, what validated a union as a marriage was the negotiations and consent of the two sets of parents. However, it was after contacts with the West that *bogadi* became directly related to marriage. This view is also shared by Matthews (1940), Kuper (1970), and Larson (1970). In line with what I have mentioned above, the laws and customs of the Bakwena list the following as constituting a valid Sekwena marriage:

> ***Tsebe*/Page** 1 ***Tseo*/marriage 4**: ***Tseo ya Sekwena e fhedile fa go dirilwe jaana*** /**A Sekwena marriage is complete once the following have been fulfilled**:
>
> > *i) Tumalano ya babedi batsaani* /Agreement between the two to be married
> >
> > *ii) Tumalano ya borra mosimane le bo rra mosetsana/*Agreement between the parents of the man and the parents of the lady
> >
> > *iii) patlo (*Laws and Customs of Bakwena).

Here, *bogadi* is not immediately listed or mentioned as the <u>main</u> requirement for a valid Sekwena marriage. Therefore, traditionally, the consent of parents was sufficient to declare a male-female union as marriage. Thus, *bogadi* was not an immediate requirement to establish and validate 'marriage'. At the same time, what cannot be ignored is that *bogadi* was nevertheless linked to marriage, for obvious reasons, that it could only be given within

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[18] Botswana National Archives: BNB/ 2 Subject: The Conflict between the native Customary Marriage and Civil Law in Bechuanaland.

marriage. Therefore marriage was a determining factor in the giving of *bogadi*, but *bogadi* was not a determining factor in the validity of marriage until the introduction of Christianity and other external factors.

4.7 Christian influence and the changing role of *bogadi*

Before I discuss how the purpose of *bogadi* has, over time, become incorporated into the aspect of validating a marriage, I will first discuss how Christianity contributed to the change in the views of the Tswana concerning *bogadi* and marriage. It must first be pointed out that Christianity was not the only external influence on the Tswana; however, it played a major role in the changes that took place in this community. The Comaroffs summarize that 'the major objective of the missionaries was to gain control over the practices through which the Southern Tswana produce and reproduce their existence' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1989). Thus, the areas that mark the basis through which a society produces and reproduces itself, like family and means of production, became the targets of missionary work. Schapera (1958) poignantly captures this when he asserts that:

> David Livingstone mentions repeatedly that 'everywhere he went, he was the first European the natives have seen and that before his coming they had never heard the gospel' (Schapera 1958: 1).

This, then, places Christianity as the most significant external contact for the Batswana.

As already indicated, Christianity was Tswana society's first significant external contact (Parsons 1997; Sales 1971). The chiefs were usually the first targets for conversion by the missionaries. Once the chief was converted to Christianity he then changed the customs and laws accordingly. One major area affected was the institution of marriage. The two major

missions to work among the Tswana were the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), among Bakwena and Bakgatla, respectively. Lacking a proper understanding of the significance and purpose of *bogadi* in marriage, the missionaries regarded this custom as the buying of a wife and therefore they perceived it as 'evil'. Schapera explains that 'the introduction of Christianity to the Tswana led to wide spread and extensive modification of traditional usages relating to *bogadi*' (Schapera 1978: 113). Schapera also noted that the missionaries' misperception of *bogadi* temporarily led to the prohibition and abolition of the practice. For instance, *bogadi* was abolished among the Ngwato in 1875 and among the Moremi and Kgatla in 1881 and 1892, respectively (*Ibid*.). However, it was later reinstated following resistance to its banning. It was during the period of its reinstatement that the pattern in the presentation of *bogadi* changed. For instance, after Kgosi Isang of the Bakgatla successfully convinced the DRC that *bogadi* was not inconsistent with Christian morality, the practice was re- introduced in 1928 and it also became part of church marriages. However, the church now insisted upon the payment of *bogadi* as a prerequisite to marriage (*Ibid*.); that is, the church demanded that *bogadi* should be paid before the couple could be married in church. This meant that Christianity redefined what a marriage was. The same law was passed among the Bakwena: 'The only corresponding Kwena law was made by Sechele II. Having joined the Church of England in 1913, he announced in I916 (with the concurrence of the local priest) that nobody might marry in that church "unless they gave bogadi' (*Ibid*. 114).

Schapera's work further shows how comparatively more *bogadi* was given at Christian marriages than by 'heathens'. *Bogadi* became tied to a specific moment in the marital process so that becoming (fully) married stopped being the protracted process it had previously been. As Comaroff and Comaroff (1989) argue, the Christian missionaries had a profound impact on the notions of time and lifetime; weddings and marriage became defined

(and registered) as being marked by a specific moment in time when the process was expected to be concluded. This inevitably excluded those who could not immediately give *bogadi* from marriage and, consequently, resulted in a rise in what were viewed non-marital unions and cohabitation from a Christian perspective (not so much from the local society's perspective). This is how the link between *bogadi* and marriage was established; a condition punctuated in time that was traditionally not part of Tswana marriage. This directly related *bogadi* to the recognition of a marriage and was now about more than the legitimacy of children and the rights of the father over his children, as had traditionally been the case.

While Larson (1970) commented that, 'because of its [*bogadi*] association with children, it was not an essential part before the marriage could be consummated,' today, because of the changes mentioned, *bogadi* is closely associated with marriage. Hence, the common response, reflected in a quote from one of my cohabiting informants concerning marriage without the giving of *bogadi*:

> Oh, that will not be marriage, that will just be marriage on paper because *bogadi*, *ga o sa batliwa ebile o sa ntshetswa magadi o ngwana ga o kake wa tsenelela merero, lenyalo la gago le tla bo le le loliya'* 'without *patlo* and the payment of *bogadi* one will always be considered a child and will never take part in adult meetings or consultations. Your marriage will be without value; especially during marriage consultations where the unmarried have no room in the negotiations. So, it is better I wait while cohabiting until we have money for *bogadi*. But I am very grateful for having waited because finally I am being rewarded. I am finally getting married.

A cohabiting man (in Molepolole, in an interview?) said the following in relation to why he could not get married without giving *bogadi* for his wife:

Really if you do not give *bogadi* you cannot say you are married. *'Mosadi ga se wa gago, bana gase ba gago: ga o sa ba ntsetsa magadi ga se ba gago.'* 'The woman is not your wife and children are not yours'. That marriage will just be nothing; so, it is better to cohabit until you can marry because if you wait (while cohabiting) then you know you are still owing but if you officiate the marriage without *bogadi* you will relax but people won't keep quiet, especially the wife and her family. They will always remind you that you are not married. *Go lo moo go go diga serite.* The scenario questions your integrity.

In sum, at the point of contact between the Western world, through conversion to Christianity, and the traditional Tswana way of life, a social arena or platform for negotiation was created concerning *bogadi* and marriage, resulting in new meanings of the relationships between the two. I argue that the changes in the relationship between *bogadi* (i.e. the timing of the giving of *bogadi*) and marriage are that prior to the encounter with missionaries, *bogadi* was never a hindrance to marriage, but after the encounter marriage could be hindered or delayed by a failure to pay *bogadi*. Christianity also introduced the notion of children being born 'out of wedlock', as discussed by Pauli (2010) in relation to marriage in Namibia, where she explores how child bearing and sexuality are exclusively tied to marriage. However, the reality is that non-marriage or the delay of marriage does not mean that people are abstaining from forming relationships. If individuals cannot marry because they are not able to give *bogadi*, but do have children, what kind of relationships are they engaged in? What implications did this change have for those who could not immediately give *bogadi*? It gave rise to non-marital relationships as a bottle-neck was created as one entered into marriage. Many of the poor were excluded from marrying. As will be discussed in the

chapters that follow, now, instead of parents meeting and doing *patlo,* depending on the socio-economic status of the groom and (his family) they either meet for *patlo* (where the groom is financially ready to marry) or for *go adima mosadi* or *go bulela ntlu* (where the groom is not financially ready to marry).

In the latter scenario, what was traditionally accepted as marriage is now reduced to mere cohabitation. Christianity also demanded the registration of marriage. To date, churches can officiate a marriage and usually have marriage officers. With the registration of marriages, these unions were classified as Christian marriages and enjoyed more advantages than customary marriages (Shropshire 1946). Later, Christianity began to appreciate *bogadi*, but made the giving of *bogadi* a prerequisite. Christianity also wanted to impact the quality of relationships in terms of sexuality (Van Dijk 2013).

4.8 Conclusions

The chapter began by giving the geographical positioning of the people, followed by the socio-economic indices, and the anthropological background. Christianity has been a dominant feature of the Batswana's cultural landscape. Through the presentation of the historical developments in the processes and procedures of the giving of *bogadi* before and after the introduction of Christianity, this chapter explored how the rollercoaster of rejection-abolition-acceptance-and the ultimate embrace of *bogadi* by Christianity led to new ways of giving *bogadi*. Traditionally, *bogadi* was not a prerequisite to marriage, but, as the church embraced the practice, the church then made it a requirement, thereby creating difficulties for those who were economically challenged. Such individuals became excluded or delayed from participating in marriage, inevitably giving rise to non-marital unions. By demanding full payment of bride-price in church marriages, the church made *bogadi* the basis of marriage, a new development that had not previously been part of Setswana culture. Thus, the church

significantly contributed to the rise of non-marital unions by re-defining what marriage is: a demand for monogamy and the rejection of unions that were traditionally accepted as marriage (polygamy and levirate marriages). Finally, some scholars have related the rise of non-marital relationships, including cohabitation, with the loss of parental authority over the lives and decision-making of their adult children (Brown 1983; Schapera 1939). On the contrary, parents remain central to the practice and play a big role in negotiations about cohabitation in some cases. The next chapter discusses how cohabiting unions were formed among my informants. This is a largely retrospective approach as I did not observe such unions in the process of formation, they were already in existence when I embarked on my fieldwork. The most important findings of the chapter are that cohabiting unions are not homogenous and parents are not always excluded from their formation.

5.0 TYPES OF COHABITATION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored how Christianity has had impact on *bogadi* practices. The introduction of formal education, Christian marriages and registration of the same has contributed to the requirement to give *bogadi* before a marriage can take place. All of the above required that a specific date be attached to a marriage, which establishes exactly when a marriage has taken place. The chapter showed that the marriage process in Setswana society was not well understood by missionaries. What comes to the fore is that, in customary Setswana traditions, there was no specific timing with regard to when a marriage is said to have taken place. The innovations introduced by Christianity made marriages solemnised in church more attractive. Consequently, Christianity gained dominance over when the *bogadi* should be paid and thereby contributed to the current understanding of marriage and cohabitation. This was in contrast to the establishing of a customary marriage, which was a process not an event. *Bogadi* was important not as a way of establishing a marriage per se, but for socially positioning individuals.

This chapter is about understanding the phenomenon of cohabitation by establishing the different types of cohabitation that people in Molepolole appeared to distinguish. A long history of cohabitation has emerged in which different forms developed, each of which merit further analysis. The chapter begins by exploring how these types can be distinguished, by looking at how negotiations between actors take place. The chapter starts by describing three types of cohabitation, discusses apparent rationales for establishing cohabiting unions, explores reasons for cohabitation and concludes by discussing challenges in cohabitation. The types of cohabitation are based on the finding that cohabiting unions are locally perceived as

not being homogenous; hence, the chapter explores the meaning of the apparent heterogeneity in cohabitation.

5.2 Heterogeneity of cohabitation?

The work has found out that cohabiting unions are being homogenous and these differences have to do with the extent or lack of parental involvement in the process of establishing a cohabiting union. Differences in the level of parental involvement lead to divergent forms of cohabitation that can be identified as, firstly, wife borrowing, secondly visiting rights,[19] and thirdly the non-consensual type of cohabitation. Therefore, being conscious of the pitfalls of methodological nuptialism in the study of relationships, understanding cohabitation as a relationship that might be independent from marriage must lead us to recognising cohabitation as a domain that exhibits a variety of forms of its own. Interestingly, while marriage moved from being a *process* into being an *event*, these forms of cohabitation seem to represent particular processes of relationships that may or may not lead to marriage. Studying cohabitation in present-day Botswana in its own right is important because there are more people who are cohabiting than who are married. They apparently cohabit in forms that can be clearly distinguished from each other. The question, then, is, if couples remain in cohabiting unions for 20 years or more, and the census results continue to show that cohabitation is on the increase, to what extent can the general public regard cohabitation as a temporary stage before marriage? Hence, in spite of long-lasting cohabiting relationships and the statistical facts that more Batswana are cohabiting than are married, the general societal and religious views that marriage is the ideal relationship while cohabitation is a deviant one, leads to a contradiction between 'fact' and 'fiction', between what 'is' and

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[19] In my opinion, the term seems to be a borrowed concept from some different Setswana practices such as *go ralala* as described by Kuper (1970). The practice refers to the allowing of a groom to visit his fiancée at her parents until, say, the birth of their first child. Therefore the term seems to be an international misconstruing of the *go ralala* practice

'ought'. The point about the ideological 'ought' is also the denial and negligence of the existence of the varieties of cohabitation; the general public's and religious views seem to emphasise cohabitation as a singular, non-marital type of relationship. In the next section I discuss the three types of cohabitation.

5.3 Types of cohabitation

This section discusses three types of cohabitation. The diversity of cohabitation as already mentioned above, is above-all explained and constituted by the participation of parents or lack of it in the negotiations of establishing a cohabitating union. The three types of cohabitation are: *go adima mosadi*, (wife borrowing) *go inyadisa* (non-consensual cohabitation) and *go bulela ntlu* (visiting rights). In addition, the place of residence may also play a role in establishing the nature or pattern of the union.

5.3.1 Go adima mosadi (wife borrowing)

This type of cohabitation refers to a situation where a woman leaves her home to join the man while neither a *patlo*, nor the giving of *bogadi* has taken place. The premise of this kind of arrangement is that there must be a verbal intention to marry. This intention must be verbalised by a representative of the man's family to the woman's family in an informal manner, in contrast to arrangements relating to marriage. If the man wants to marry, but is not financially ready to do so, he makes the point clear to his parents, who must go, on his behalf, and ask the parents of the woman to allow her to join him while he gets ready for marriage. This reflects the point that various forms of cohabitation may function differently from marriage. Whereas marriage has increasingly become marked by one point in time, namely the wedding day(s), cohabitation may still harbour forms of relationships that can be much more of a process over time.

The two sets of parents meet informally and agree, in principle, on the matter. This form of cohabitation is acceptable, respected and has better social status than the others. This is because the parents have participated in the establishment of the relationship, albeit informally, with the understanding that marriage will follow eventually.

5.3.2 *Go inyadisa* (non-consensual cohabitation)

This kind of cohabitation is based on individual choice. Parents are not involved and sometimes they may be openly against the couple being together. Thus, the couple decide independently, without the consent of parents, without *patlo* and without the payment of *bogadi*, to live together. This type of arrangement is shunned. This is usually the type of non-marital union that the word 'cohabitation' refers to.

5.3.3 *Go bulela ntlu* (visiting rights)

This is the term that the informants in this type of relationship used to describe their union. *Go bulela ntlu* literally means to 'open the door for (someone)'. It refers to the granting of visitation rights to the man who intends to marry, but is not ready at that particular moment to formalise the union. In this form of cohabitation, the man leaves his family and joins his partner at either her place or that of her parents. To be clear, visitation rights are not about an occasional visit; the man actually moves in with the partner and her family. This is contrary to the usual patrifocal relationship, whereby the wife moves to the man's home. In modern times, neo-location has become more common among couples as they move neither to the husband's paternal compound, nor to the wife's compound, but instead settle in urban areas. For most of the cases cited, a child has been born, and the father to the child agrees to take responsibility for the child. His parents then solicit the cooperation of the female partner and her parents so that their son is allowed to visit his partner and child. This privilege to visit is

given in the expectation that he will marry the mother of his child. In the meantime, he is expected to financially support the baby and the mother and thus maintain the relationship while preparing to get married once resources permit. This again illustrates that while marriage is the event, cohabitation rather represents a longer process of relationship formation.

5.4 Establishing the three types of cohabitation

In this section, I present a number of ethnographic cases from the field research in Molepolole. The cases will help to demonstrate the various types of cohabitation that can be distinguished on the basis of my interlocutors' own experiences and narratives about these circumstances, choices made and parental interventions.

Go bulela ntlu (Visiting rights)

How do visiting rights as a form of cohabitation look like in practice? The case of Boyce is informative of this particular arrangement.

In 2008, Boyce had been cohabiting for 19 years. Boyce is staying with his mother and other siblings. His father has passed away. However, at the time of my fieldwork he was staying with his girlfriend, Segolame at her mother's place. His girlfriend, Segolame fell pregnant and had a baby. He narrates his life story below:

> After my girlfriend fell pregnant, her parents came to inform my parents about the pregnancy. I admitted to my parents that I know the girl and I was responsible for the pregnancy. When they asked what my plans were in regard to the pregnancy, I explained that I loved the woman and would want to marry her. This response was conveyed to my partner's parents. My uncle further asked me how much resources I had towards 'getting married'. I had nothing. He explained to me that he could not

carry the burden of my marriage all by himself. I need to first '*ke beye sengwe fa tafoleng gore a itse gore o nthusetsa mo go eng, le gone ere a bitsa batho a ba supegetse, sengwe go supa fa ke tlhwaafetse ka go nyala*' (to put something on the table to serve as a starting point and as evidence for commitment to marriage preparations.) Unfortunately, I didn't have anything at all. After the child was born, my partner's parents came to officially let my family know that my partner has delivered our baby. I really wanted to see my baby and its mother. But she was confined[20] for three months and I couldn't see them. It hurt me so bad. After the confinement period my aunt (Mma Malome) went to see my partner's parents and negotiated that they allow me to visit and see my child. Permission was granted. My partner's mother stays at *masimo* (agricultural lands) so I spend most of the time in the village with my partner at their home. I have been staying with her since.

In some areas in Botswana, a three site settlement is still practiced. This type of settlement refers to a system in which one family has three different land entitlements: the home, agricultural lands, and cattle posts. So, at any given time, the members of the family are divided according to these family properties and the activities these require. In this case, while Boyce's girlfriend and her younger siblings are at the home, the mother spends most of her time at the lands.

Boyce cannot get married because he is not able to support his marriage financially and his family is also not able to do so. The development in which the financial burden has been socially placed on the couple that is getting married is well explained by van Dijk in that:

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[20] *Botsetsi* refers to a period of confinement of a mother with a new baby. Usually, the period is accompanied by some restrictions. At the end of this confinement period a feast is held to officially introduce the baby to the community and to re-integrate the mother into her social life.

weddings have not only become costlier than before and much more crucial in the marking of class, status and prestige, they have also given way to reformulations in the responsibilities concerning marital arrangements, in the provision of resources and in the taking charge of glamorous styling of these events …these shifts are creating a new sense of joint responsibility among young couples in terms of their role in providing such resources (Van Dijk 2017:29)

Lack of resources has made it impossible for Boyce to get married. He is, however, allowed to visit with her partner at her parents' home to see his baby, but he has practically moved in with his partner. This movement by Boyce was confirmed by his mother in an interview. She said that although she is not happy that her son had moved in with his girlfriend's family, she has a good relationship with the parents of Boyce's partner. They participate in each other's ceremonies, including funerals. Occasionally, she asks Boyce's partner to come and help during such ceremonies in her family.

While the initiative in this case came from the man, it also signals another form of cohabiting relationship that parents can initiate.

Parents suggesting visiting rights

At times, some parents might initiate the visiting rights as reflected in the narrative by Masakeng below:

The case of Masakeng

Masakeng is staying with her partner at her parents' place. He is not working. Occasionally, he gets a job with the drought relief project. After they realised that she was pregnant, he told his uncle about the pregnancy, *'a mpotsa gore ngwana ke tla mo nayang.'* He asked me what I would give the child. (i.e. how I intend to support

the child). Honestly, I had no answer. So we waited for her parents to come and let us (my parents) know about the pregnancy. They came when she was almost four months. Since I loved her, I admitted that I was responsible for the pregnancy. My uncle then went with my maternal aunt to give the response. We waited for the baby to be born. After the baby was born, her parents again sent representatives to my parents to let them know that the child had been born. My uncle, aunt and I went to see the baby (though I had already seen her by myself). I did not have money. Since I knew that a woman can be borrowed, I asked my uncle if he could borrow the woman on my behalf. He asked me again, *mosadi le ngwana o tla ba nayang, kana ke nna ke tla lo jesang ba botlhe?* (What will you give the woman and the child or will I end feeding all of you here?). *Mme morago a akanya gore go botoka nna ke kopelwe go bulelwa ntlu.* Later he suggested that the best thing to do was that we request from the girl's parents that I be given visiting rights to visit in order to see my baby and partner. That was done and I was granted visiting rights and now I almost live here.

What is important for an understanding of this case is that Masakeng is not working and his uncle is not able to assist Masakeng to get married. His uncle is already supporting the extended family. In order for Masakeng to marry, his uncle must solely finance the marriage. Van Dijk (2010) has observed that in many cases in Botswana, the couple must actually foot the bill for getting married. In order to do so, some couples end up taking out loans with the commercial banks to cover costs. For example, Van Dijk notes that 'weddings in Botswana have become hugely costly affairs with weddings now ranging from a spectacular P100,000 to P200 000. This forces couples to take out a bank loan to cover the costs of their wedding and leaves them with debts that usually takes years to pay' (2010: 290). However, in the case of Masakeng, a bank loan is not a possibility since he is not working and therefore cannot pay

back the bank. His uncle is already burdened with taking care of the extended family, therefore, to add another family will be too expensive for him. He therefore suggested to his nephew that, instead of borrowing the woman, he should get visiting rights; while borrowing still requires some form of wealth exchange, visiting rights become the 'cheaper' option. The significant role of the maternal uncle in Setswana culture has been well documented (Schapera 1970; Radcliffe-Brown 1924).

Go inyadisa (non-consensual cohabitation)

The case of Boleng

> Boleng is not working and is seasonally employed in the drought relief projects. She had been in a series of failed relationships and finally she just slipped into a cohabiting relationship without really giving it much thought, because she feared that she might lose the man. Boleng is 46 years old. She never stayed with her biological parents. She was raised by her aunt. Her aunt only had sons, so her mother gave her away to her own sister.[21] She has three children all from different fathers. She explains with some pain about her first pregnancy. She said she had a very vague idea about sex and how babies came into being. She had a fling with a soldier. One day they had sex and she missed her period, and thereafter assumed she was pregnant. She did not tell anyone about the pregnancy, including the boyfriend. At that particular point in time, one of her brothers was working in Jwaneng. His wife got transferred to a rural area and could not take her child with her because they did not want the child to change schools. The child had to stay with the father in Jwaneng. So since Boleng was no longer at school, she was asked to go and stay at Jwaneng to help take care of the child. She left without telling her boyfriend about the pregnancy. Occasionally, at

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[21] It is a common Setswana practice where siblings or close relatives give their children to each other in cases of infertility, or, in this case, where one does not have a girl or boy child.

weekends and public holidays they went home to Molepolole. She never met the boyfriend during these visits. However, at eight months she confided to the domestic worker who then told her brother's wife when she came for the weekend. That was how the parents came to know about the pregnancy. When the parents of her boyfriend were informed of the pregnancy, the soldier boyfriend denied responsibility as Boleng had never told him about the pregnancy. With the second child the man had promised to marry her but later disappeared into thin air. She is currently cohabiting with the father of her third and youngest child. Her partner had lost both parents and they allege that the reason they are not married is because none of the relatives is willing to lead the *bogadi* negotiations. She says because of the previous disappointments, she is willing to stay with him. However, she says his moving in with her was not something that they talked about. He began by visiting, a day two, three..., leaving behind a few items until almost all his clothes were at her place. But she did not question that behaviour because she actually preferred things that way, given her previously failed relationships.

Boleng's life story illustrates that some couples gradually move in together with no clear discussions leading to such a step. The other factor is that the lady has been in a series of failed relationships and at 40 she felt some form of permanency was in order, since she was afraid of losing another partner. What I learn from this life story is that cohabitation does not always come about for economic reasons, conflicts, pregnancy, etc., but may result from avoidance of loneliness, loss of status and social respect.

At times* go inyadisa *arises due to conflicts within families

At times, negotiations on marriage are embattled with misunderstandings within the families. This ultimately either cripples the negotiations completely or suspends them.

It has been observed that family and kinship ties have been weakening over time due to such factors as urbanisation (Schapera 1939). This has resulted in the younger generation gaining greater independence from the older one (Gulbrandsen 1986). The narrative by Mma Selonyana demonstrates that unresolved differences between families can lead to cohabitation:

> Mma Selonyana is the oldest of my cohabiting informants. She is a cook for a local primary school. She cohabited with her partner against the will of her relatives. She had lost both parents and was left in the custody of her brother. Twice her brother had attempted to sell their family home. After the first attempt, she asked her relatives to intervene. The relatives failed to do so, but the deal did not go through for reasons he did not explain to her. Again her brother put the plot up for sale. When he put the plot up for sale for the second time Mma Selonyana decided to apply for her own plot with the land board. She submitted an application for a residential plot with the Kweneng land board and was successful. After the successful sale of their home by her brother, her partner assisted her in developing her new plot. Eventually, they moved in together against the will of her relatives. She did this and let her partner stay with her, in defiance of the advice of her relatives, because they had failed to defend and protect her against the sale of their home by her brother. This life story demonstrates that conflicts that are not resolved within the family can actually push some to cohabit; while this is not a case of borrowing (since no agreement with the parents/elders of the family was sought), it also demonstrates cohabitation as relating to specific forms of agency.

***Go adima mosadi* (Wife borrowing)**

The case of Setho

Setho and her partner Tiego have been living together, before the giving of *bogadi*, for 18 years in 2008. Their eldest child is 19. Setho works as a General Duty Assistant in one of the health facilities in Molepolole. When asked to describe how they came to stay together this is what she said:

> *Ba ne ba ntimetse masimo jaanong ba batla go re ke ye go a tlhokomela. Nnete ke gore ko tshimologong ne re batlile go nyalana mme re sena madi a magadi, e bile go le thata gore a nthuse le ngwana ke le kwa gaetsho. Re ne re dumalana gore ke adimiwe*. (They had ploughed a field for me now they wanted me to come and take care of the field. The truth is that we had always wanted to marry but had no money. And we were finding it difficult that, with the little he had, for him to support me and the child at my family's place was more expensive,[22] so we agreed that he borrows me).

Setho cohabited with her partner for 18 years before tying the knot. They got married in 2008, during my fieldwork. The reason that was presented to the parents of Setho is that Tiego had ploughed the field and the crops needed someone to hoe/weed them. However, after the harvest season was over she does not go back home. She also told me that they (she and her partner) had agreed that when registering her children at school she should use their father's surname. This is an anomaly. Generally, unless a man marries a woman, the children will normally use their mother's surname. She explains that the reason they took such a decision was to ensure that their children also had rights to employment benefits in the event that something happened to their father before they got married. They know that, should her

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[22] This I inserted from the first interviews after followed-up on the case during my fieldwork revisit in December 2009 to January 2010.

partner die before they are married, claiming benefits for her and the children might be a challenge socially as well as legally.

I also observed, interestingly, that though the couple had been living together in their own independent household, the negotiations and the wedding ceremonies took place, not at their home but at that of their parents. I was present at the District Commissioner's office in Molepolole when the couple solemnised their marriage, so I had an opportunity to chat with her aunt, Tidimalo. I asked Tidimalo why the wedding was not taking place at the couple's home. She explained that before *patlo* could take place, the residential place of the cohabiting couple could not be a 'real' home: *Re ne re ise re mo ise kwa ga bone. Mme go tswa gone jaana ba bone bana re ba relelela kwa ga bone.* (We had not yet taken her to her place, but from now on, all negotiations of their children will take place at their home).

We can deduce from this life story the complexity of negotiations in a cohabiting union. Under normal circumstances, children will remain under their mother's surname if their parents are not married. However, the perceived risk of remaining consistent with the practice that if parents are not married the children takes their mother's surname makes the couple decide to give their children the surname of their father. This also indicates the level of commitment that the couple has in their relationship and their interest in the welfare of their children.

This narrative explains the real reason the couple decided to cohabit: they had a child and wanted to get married. This implies that the couple loved each other and were committed to raising their child (ren) together. Moreover, an 'apparent' reason is given. This is a reason that is used in the process of negotiation between the parents of the two to circumvent the cultural expectation that only in marriage can it be socially acceptable for the couple to stay together. The apparent reason is that she is borrowed in order to help the father of her child with work in the field.

5.5 Cohabitation as agency

Cohabiting couples intentionally put measures in place that will enable them to achieve their goals to be together and take care of their children. Nkage and her partner Montsheki decide to circumvent the existing structure by deciding to 'get married.'

The case of Nkage and Montsheki

> *E rile ke sena go lemoga gore ke imile, ke ne ka bolelela mma-malome. Mma-malome a bolelela botsadi jo bongwe. Ke ne ka bodiwa ke mma-malome le mmamane gore ke imisitswe ke mang, ko kae? Ke ne ka ba bolelela. Botsadi mme ba buisanya. Morago mma-malome le mmamane ba romiwa go ya go bega boimana goo rra mosimane. Morago ga kgwedi di ka nna pedi borra mosimane ba tsisa phetolo ya gore ba utlwile, ebile ba amogela molato. Go ne go tsile mma-malome le kgaitsadie. Fa ke sena go nna motsetsi mma-malome a ya go bega gape gore ngwana o tshotswe. Ba ne ba tla go bona ngwana. Erile go santse go ntse jalo ke be ke ima gape, ngwana a nale ngwaga fela (laughing). Ka bonako ra bo re dumalana gore re batla go nyala, mme dipuisanyo goo rra mosimane tsa pala (mme mpa e ya gola kana) ka gore rragwe o ne a seyo. Ba tsisa lefoko la gore, ka ba na le bothata ba santse ba emetse rragwee mosimane, a bana ba ka se name ba atamelane rra-a- bone ka gore mosimane one e bile a setse a beilwe setsha ke land board. Batsadi ba kopana ganna le merero ka adimiwa ra tla go thibelela mmogo fa gore ke tle go mo thuse go kuba.* (After I realised that I was pregnant I told my uncle's wife about it, who informed other parents and relatives. She and my maternal aunt asked me who and where the man responsible for the pregnancy was. I told them. After some time (about a month or so), my uncle's wife and my maternal aunt went to officially inform my partner's family about the pregnancy. After about two months they came to bring the response.

They agreed that their son was responsible for the pregnancy. After I gave birth, they were again informed about the delivery. His aunt and sister came to see the baby after three months bringing some clothes and toiletries for the baby. They also brought the response that they acknowledge the damage charges and they will pay. At six months a feast to officially mark the end of my confinement period took place and his relatives also came. Then, just when the child turned a year, we realised we were pregnant, again! (She laughs at the thought). We then immediately decided that we wanted to get married. My partner, Montsheki who is a mechanic in the Botswana Defense Force had applied for a plot, and the Land Board had just allocated him one. Unfortunately, his father was 'dead' (I later discovered that he was not dead actually, not physically but dead socially), so no one wanted to lead the marriage discussions in the absence of his biological father, (but in the meantime the tummy was growing! She giggles[23]). But then his parents came and explained that while still waiting for the partner's father, they suggest that 'the children should come closer to their father,' that is they move in and stay with the man. (Children include the lady as well). So there were consultations between the two sets of parents; *Tshenyo*[24] (penalty for impregnating a girl before marriage) was immediately charged and I was thereby borrowed to bring children closer to their father while my partner's relatives located my partner's father. We then came and started to build our home here.

This narrative demonstrates a kind of unexpected agency. The couple is trying to gain control over their affairs. Pregnancy ignites a number of reactions by both the couple and their respective families. The couple loves and cares for each other and also wants to take

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[23] The reason they wanted to kick start the marriage negotiations was that, since parents had delayed about damage charges, the second child very soon might make them to speed up charges and probably charge more, but once marriage is in the picture then the 'damage' charge might be reasonable.

[24] *Tshenyo* refers to a penalty for impregnating a woman before marriage, especially if it is her first pregnancy.

responsibility for their children. In this case, the couple exercises some agency albeit unexpectedly. The parents of the girl are in no hurry to demand *tshenyo*; their child has just given birth, and her partner and his parents have taken responsibility for the pregnancy and have actually come to see the baby. However, while the baby is still young, the couple falls pregnant again. Nkage and Montsheki know that once the girl's parents come to know that she is pregnant again, they might be angry. This might make them enforce the 'damage' charges. So, before the parents are aware of the second pregnancy the couple decides that they want to get married. They take advantage of the recently allocated residential plot.

From the narrative discussed, it is apparent that the decision to cohabit is multi-pronged: love and commitment, pregnancy, avoidance of more penalties for the man and his family, family constraints in starting negotiations for marriage, love for each other and the desire to take care of their children.

The cited cases reflect the general processes through which cohabiting relationships are established. These demonstrate the heterogeneity in cohabiting. Disaggregating cohabiting unions shows the importance of being cautious for methodological nuptialism. Taken together, it is evident that these various forms of cohabitation generate a level of initiative, flexibility, room for manoeuvre and negotiability that weddings and marital arrangements increasingly seem to lack due to the stringent requirements, conditions, timing and planning (see Van Dijk 2010, 2012, 2013). An understanding of these differences can lead to the formulating of different policies to meet individual needs.

The next section is about the negotiation and navigation of cohabitation and the different levels of expectations in terms of morality, respectability and, above all, generational differences (for the anthropological interpretation of 'navigation' as a social process, see Vigh 2003). Cohabitation demonstrates explicitly how people try to negotiate and navigate the prevailing ideas, moralities and structures around marriage. The fact that

people negotiate and navigate may not come as a surprise, but the fact that couples and parents join forces may do. There seems to be a common and shared interest in this navigation, and cohabitation is, in many cases, the happy outcome of this. This feeds into the ideas of Carsten (2000) about relationality, i.e. the notion that ideas of kinship are highly creative. This demonstrates the 'makeability' of relationships (often as a happy solution) and shows clearly the room that the various forms of cohabitation allow both the couples and parents; all these forms generate respectability in old or new forms.

5.6 Negotiating and navigating cohabitation

This section explores what I refer to as apparent rationales for cohabitation. By apparent rationales I refer to the reasons used by parents and cohabiting couples to establish a non-marital cohabiting union. Since cohabitation is not marriage, why do parents allow their children to stay together 'illegally'? For example, in the Setho case above, she says she was allowed to join her partner because 'they had ploughed a field for me and wanted me to come and hoe.' But the question remains, why did she not go back after the hoeing season? Similarly, why is Agang not going back after de-bushing? Why are the grandparents taking for ever to see their grandchild? In the table below, I present some of these rationales that parents and/or the couples themselves are providing so as to enable cohabitation to take place. Certain leaders maintain the view that cohabiting between a couple as wife and husband takes place usually after *patlo* has been done and in most cases when *bogadi* has been given and the couple is married. Yet, this is highly contested. The question, then, is how is it possible to establish cohabitation outside the structures of *patlo* and *bogadi?* This is done by navigating and circumventing the structures through the use of 'apparent rationales'. These enable the parents and their children to establish a non-marital cohabitation in order to allow the couples to love each other, live together, establish families and raise their children

without undue disruptions. The three tables represent rationales that were given by interlocutors, parents and the couples themselves so as to provide for, or negotiate, legitimate grounds for the three types of cohabitation.

Table: 1 Rationales given in cases of *go bulela ntlu* cohabitation

Apparent rationale (Why does the man shift to the woman's home?)	Case	No. of cases observed
For security reasons	1. parents of the lady have died, therefore no adult men in the homestead[25]	1
	2. Parents of the lady have died and she cannot leave her younger siblings alone[26]	1
For accommodation	3. Men from a different village therefore no accommodation of his own	2
Failure of parents to handle negotiations	4. Uncle of the men not willing to start negotiations because by virtue of being the uncle he will be forced by social obligations to foot the marriage bill or take care of the woman if she joins his family since his nephew is not working''	1
Total number of observed cases		*5*

Source: Field data

Table 1 give reasons that the cohabitees used to move in together before they are officially married. In all these cases, the man in the relationship has failed to provide for *bogadi*, shelter and the general welfare of the family for his partner at different levels. The reasons given allow him to move in with his partner at her place of abode. The table further shows the nature of reasons that are given to allow an otherwise 'illegal' union. The underlying desire by the couple is to be with each other. Since this is not possible outside the ritual of *patlo*, some reasons are provided in order to allow the couple to be able to live together. Such reasons are, as explained from the table: security – since there is no other adult staying with the girlfriend and other siblings, the man moves in to provide physical security, while the main reason is that he joins his partner. Other reasons include lack of accommodation and the

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[25] In both cases, the men do not have their own accommodation; they still live with their parents and are not engaged in any meaningful employment.

failure of parents to handle marriage negotiations. All these apparent rationales are ways of negotiating and navigating the structure of marriage.

Table: 2 Rationales given in cases of *go inyadisa* cohabitation

Apparent rationale (Why do the woman and man shift to live with each other without the consent of parents?)	Case	No. of cases observed
Sharing of resources	1. Man has lost job and comes from a different village therefore has no accommodation of his own and the lady already has a home	2
	2 'we have children but our money is not enough to have two homes' but parents of the lady against our union	
Failure of parents to handle negotiations	1. Parents of the lady both died. The brother sells their home and relatives fail to intervene. The couple decides to have their own plot and move in together.	1
	2. Mother of the man does not want to engage in negotiations because her son is younger than the woman and he is not working. She fears the woman might abuse her son.	1
Total number of observed cases		*4*

Source: Field data

Table 2 shows reasons given in order to establish a type of cohabitation that are either done without the consent of parents or as a direct challenge to their authority. Two of the couples moved in together to share accommodation. In the other two instances, cohabitation has been a result of the failure of parents to resolve family conflicts, while in the last instance the failure of the mother of the man to accept her son's fiancé led to the couple living together without her blessing. At times, the younger generation finds itself at odds with the structures of the society and has to exercise some form of agency.

Table: 3 Rationales given in cases of *go adima mosadi* cohabitation

Apparent rationale (Why does the woman shift to the man's home?)	Case	No. of cases observed
To provide labour	1. A woman shifts to the home of the partner to help with hoeing and ploughing	4
	2. Woman shifts to assist the man in clearing the plot he has been allocated	7
	3. Woman shifting to take care of a home of the partner when the partner's mother is away	1
Failure of parents to handle negotiations	4. A woman shifts to the home of the partner because her father, who is the chief decision-maker, is away and therefore cannot negotiate for marriage. No one wishes to lead the marriage negotiations.	1
Grand-parenting	5. Parents of the man want to spend time with their grand child	3
Total number of observed cases		*16*

Source: field data

Table 3 explores reasons that were given by different couples to allow them to cohabit outside marriage. In this type of cohabitation there is some form of informal understanding between both sets of parents and the cohabiting couples. The reasons given might seem trivial, but are very important since they allow the establishment of an otherwise impossible union. It seems what is important for both the parents and their children are to enable the couple to be together and raise their kids. However, since both parents and the couples involved are not able to raise resources that will allow a marriage to take place, because getting married is very expensive (Van Dijk 2010), they construct such reasons that will allow the couples to stay together. These reasons are: to provide labour, failure of parents to handle negotiations, and grand-parenting. What is of interest is that the woman who moves then takes forever to provide labour, while parents seem to take forever to be able to handle

negotiations for marriage and grandparents take forever 'seeing' their grandchildren. These seemingly insignificant reasons are important because they allow the couples to be together and raise their children. In the next section, I elaborate reasons for cohabitation.

5.7 Reasons for cohabitation

A thematic analysis of data reveals that there are different 'sets' of reasons for entry into the various types of cohabitation. These reasons cluster around pregnancy; socio-economic challenges; death of parents; family conflicts; possession of a residential plot; negative HIV status; love; and commitment.

Pregnancy, cohabitation and the negotiation of parental authority

Pregnancy in most African societies is treated with awe and respect. Pregnancy and childbearing have an emotional value, irrespective of whether one is married or unmarried. It has been observed that, over time, motherhood and marriage have become unrelated (Kubanji 2013; Mookodi 2004). This is largely due to the loss of stigma in relation to unwed motherhood (Schapera 1939; Gulbrandsen 1986).

Dyer (2007) notes that 'children are valued globally for reasons of joy and happiness and for other emotional needs they satisfy for their parents' (Dyer 2007: 75; see also Dyer, Abrahams, Hoffman & Van der Spuy 2002; Koster-Oyekan 1999). This value arises from the belief that children are a blessing from God and/or the ancestors; that the pregnant mother can be bewitched (Naidu 2014; Ntoane 1988). The same is noted by Dyer (2007) indicating that, from a religious perspective, children are often seen as a gift of God or the 'gods'. Not being able to conceive may imply that the person, usually the woman, has sinned or is deemed to be unworthy of God's holy gift (Dyer 2007: 74; Ogubandajo 1995). Many scholars have recorded how women suffer due to infertility (Dyer 2007: 74; Ogubandajo 1995; Tilson & Larsen 2000).

Naidu further explains that because of some of these convictions 'there is an entrenched belief that a pregnant woman and her unborn foetus must be protected' (2014: 147). Ntoane further explains that, among Batswana, it is important that a pregnant woman is taken care of emotionally, physically and spiritually, because this will ensure that such a woman is in balance, because 'having in-balance may cause misfortune' (1988: 21). Pregnancy is therefore regarded as a family event to be guided by experienced mentors in the family and thus not left in the hands of the young and inexperienced couples alone (Sparks 1990: 155). For this reason, almost every pregnancy needs to be reported to the elderly so that proper precautions can be taken, including informing the parents of the man responsible for the pregnancy. It has been already stated (Mokomane 2005b) that in Botswana love affairs are usually private affairs until either pregnancy or marriage happens, and then it becomes a public affair.

In all cases in the study, pregnancy preceded cohabitation. That is, before the couple ultimately moves in together they have fallen pregnant and a child has been born. This is a general pattern throughout the formation of the cohabiting couples. Therefore, pregnancy was found to be a determining factor in all cases and appears to operate as a pre-condition for access to cohabitation.

We need to note that although parents do not condone pre-marital pregnancy, once it happens they usually accept it. Once a couple realises that there is pregnancy, the woman's parents need to be informed. There is a cultural expectation to officially inform the parents of the man in question about the pregnancy. If the man knows and accepts the pregnancy, he is commonly asked by the parents '*Maikaelelo a gago ke eng*', i.e. what are his intentions about the woman with regard to the pregnancy? The idea of 'intentions' seems to exclusively reside with the man, whereas the wife is considered passive. If the intentions have to do with marriage, it is at this point that negotiations for marriage usually begin. Yet, as these cases of

borrowing begin to demonstrate, the woman is not completely passive; in both cases, the cohabitation forges a particular agency for both parties. Thus, the question of 'intentions' masks and obliterates the fact that the 'borrowing' is related to the couples' own ideas of their relational agency. In this sense, pregnancy becomes central in the determination of cohabitation.[27] Though, it can be argued that it is not necessarily the case that a pregnancy always precedes the negotiation for cohabitation, it is nevertheless striking that all the cohabiting cases that I studied were preceded by a pregnancy. An explanation for this process whereby pregnancy creates room for manoeuvre in establishing cohabiting relations of various types must be sought in the realm of reproductive ideology and the reproductive pressure that the kinship system seems to foster. While reproduction and the continuation of the bloodline is and remains important for a variety of reasons (inheritance, transference of rights, old-age care, etc.), pregnancy also indicates the visibility of a relationship. A pregnancy can never remain hidden and concealed and therefore it places matters of respectability, responsibility, decision-making and care at the centre. Next to marriage, cohabitation in its various forms provides ways to adopt and negotiate these concerns regarding the public status of all involved.

Lack of financial support/socio-economic status

Though other reasons have been given for cohabitation, as demonstrated, being unable to give *bogadi* is the leading reason. Many scholars have discussed how marriage is difficult due to financial constraints (Mokomane 2005b), while others have demonstrated the magnitude of these expenses (Van Dijk 2010). Therefore, consistent with other findings about cohabitation in Botswana (Mokomane 2005b), financial limitations contribute to couples cohabiting. Poverty is perceived by cohabitants as a reason for choosing cohabitation over

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[27] I am not in any way implying that pregnancy always precedes marriage, but in instances where the couple falls pregnant then the pregnancy 'demands' that a decision in relation to the quality of the relationship be defined.

marriage. This is a problematic point since statistics suggest that many people, and not just those who are poor, are cohabiting. Therefore this assertion needs to be taken with caution, given the high level of cohabitation in Botswana. Poverty alone cannot explain the high rates, since Botswana has been regarded as a relatively affluent country. This point will be more fully elaborated later in the chapter and also in the next chapter. It is important to understand this point in relation to the visibility, respectability and status of the couples and their families as well. While marriage has increasingly become a field of ever increasing expectations, the flip-side of this rising magnitude of expectations is that low performance, downgrading and loss of status may occur much more easily than before. Cohabitation again opens a much more flexible terrain in which these concerns of status-profiling, respectability and prestige do not immediately emerge in public life.

Possession of a residential plot

Allocation of land in Botswana has changed. While, in the past, land ownership was through inheritance along patriarchal lines (Schapera 1938), today land allocation is open to any citizen who is 21 years or older, through the Land Board, irrespective of gender and marital status. Schapera explains that 'land allocation was the entitlement of married tribes men and such land was inherited' (1938: 197). He further explains that, in respect of arable land, the headmen would '[…] allot portions to all heads of households in his ward' (1938: 200). This system generally deprived unmarried young men and women from land ownership. However, with the coming of independence and the shifting of land allocation from the chieftaincy to the Land Boards, land ownership was much more available to most Batswana. This explains why land ownership by the young and unmarried is an apparent reason for unmarried cohabitation. This is apparent since its ownership is used to allow the couple to move in together.

Negative HIV status

The case of Rra Keabetswe

> Keabetswe was born in 1978 in a village in the outskirts of Gaborone city. He is the youngest child. His father passed away when he was a year old. His mother is a retired employee of the City Council. He did not make it beyond junior certificate level at school, therefore could not get a good job. He met his partner Nkokonyane when they worked together as drivers for the Kweneng council. He was employed temporarily in the Drought Relief Project while Nkokonyane was and is still employed on a permanent basis. In 2006 Nkokonyane fell pregnant. As customarily expected, her aunt was sent to go and officially inform the parents of the father of the baby about the pregnancy. Her partners' parents never responded. (Most probably, because she already had another child and that the mother of the man was not happy with the lady because she was older than her son). However, he personally assured Nkokonyane that he will be there for her and their baby. He then moved in to stay with his partner.

This case is unique in a number of ways: first, the lady is older than the man by two years; second, she is working and the man is not; hence, the mother of the man is not happy with the relationship. These are not consistent with the generally held views that the male partner should be older than the woman and that he must be the provider. But what is most important in understanding the significance of the case of cohabitation is their HIV status. In some circles in Botswana and elsewhere, cohabitation is perceived as being linked to an increase in HIV infections (Omanje, Bosire & Mwenda 2015; Shoko 2012: 91; Smith 2007; Webb 1997; Berman, 2015:130). It is, however, interesting, and contrary to some of these widely held assumptions, that this couple actually decided to stay together precisely because they are HIV

<u>negative</u> and want to protect each other from infection by staying together, irrespective of what their parents might think.

How and why did Keabetswe moved in with Nkokonyane? They moved in together to protect themselves from contracting the HIV virus. Their cohabitation is one way of minimising the possibility of multiple partners. In order to fight HIV/AIDS, the government of Botswana encourages pregnant women to take an HIV test through a programme called PMTCT (Prevention of Mother-to Child Transmission). So Nkokonyane and Keabetswe took this test and they both tested negative, and Keabetswe quotes Nkokonyane: '*Ke nako ya megare, ga re nna re kgaogane re ipaa mo diphatseng*. (This is HIV era and staying apart from each other will put us both at risk.)

At this time, Keabetswe was no longer working, so he could not refuse the offer she made.[28] That is, it is the lady who invited the man to join her at her place. During a meeting that I had with Keabetswe's mother, she explained to me that she did not want her son to stay with Nkokonyane because her son was not working. Moreover, the son was younger than the lady, and she feared he would be abused in such a relationship.

This is a very interesting case, which could be used for educational purposes in fighting against the spread of HIV and AIDS. For example, Van Dijk (2010) notes that 'many groups in Botswana perceive marriage as a social panacea in the fight against AIDS' (2010: 282). Despite the general expectation that marriage is a safe haven from the HIV virus (Kposowa, 2013), some studies link marriage with HIV/AIDS (Shaibu & Dube 2002). It has been observed elsewhere that marriage is a relational context in which a high number of women contract HIV/AIDS (Parikh 2007; Smith 2007). Parikh and Smith (2007) carried out studies in Uganda and Nigeria, respectively, and have demonstrated how precisely marriage came to be the major source of HIV infection.

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[28] In the following chapter, I discuss how individuals are affected under the different types of cohabitation and how parents of the cohabiting males feel about male cohabitation. And Keabetswe's experience will shed more light, as he gives us a sense of how men are actually positioned in this type of cohabitation.

Parikh carried out six months of ethnographic research in south eastern Uganda, in which she examined how the social and economic contexts surrounding men's extramarital sexuality and the dynamics of marriage put men and women at risk for HIV infection. Research has shown that married women's greatest risk of HIV infection is their husbands' extramarital sexual activities (2007: 1198).

Other studies have found that there is no significant difference in terms of resistance to condom use between couples that are cohabiting and those that are married (Maharaj & Cleland 2005), placing the two at equal risk of HIV infection. Non-marital cohabitation has been associated with general immorality (Mashau 2011) and the risk of HIV/AIDS infection (Kposowa 2013). However, this general perception might not be entirely true, as this case suggests. In circumstances such as those described above, cohabitation may protect people against the spread of AIDS, whereas marriage can expose them to HIV infections. Marriage exposes the differences in control that women and men have in terms of sexual relations and the quest for protection.

There is an element of agency here, too, that is not evident in the previous cases. However, because they are now aware that they are both HIV negative and realise that staying apart will increase the chances of exposure to HIV/AIDS they decided to stay together. Physically staying together will increase the likelihood of their faithfulness to each other and lessen the chances of one of them being tempted to engage in another relationship that could expose them to the HIV virus. They decide to stay together despite the fact that the man's mother totally disapproves of the relationship.

This reason was given by only one couple. However, I found it very important to mention. The fact that a cohabiting couple justified cohabitation using their HIV negative status suggests that the general perception about cohabitation might be wrong. It further suggests that cohabitation may actually be used to protect people against the spread of AIDS.

Death of parents

In all cases of cohabitation described above, one of the partners had lost at least one parent at the point at which the couple decided to cohabit. Though this was a qualitative study that did not aim to make any generalisations, the issue of death needs further research. How do I explain why such surprising correlations seem to exist between the death of a parent and cohabitation? Why would the loss of a parent possibly lead to cohabitation? Is the loss of parental authority required to establish a marriage a contributing factor?

Love and commitment

In Botswana, in the past, most marriages were arranged. This meant that there was little room for love (romantic) especially in relation to the first wife. Schapera explains this when he describes his findings among the Bakgatla in Botswana. He notes that for the younger generation 'their more urgent problem is not whether to marry or not but who to marry and when. In the olden days even this was seldom a problem to those immediately concerned (*the couple that is to get married*) for their marriages were arranged' (1966: 39). From this perspective, one can draw a conclusion that there was little room for love and emotional attachment as the basis for marriage. Marriage was then viewed as an 'essential step for every normal person to take' (*Ibid*.: 38). With the arrival of modernity through urbanisation, formal education, and general loss of stigma regarding pre-marital child bearing and failure to marry, the younger generation now chooses their own partners. And love is an important criterion in such choices. The presence of emotional attachment and commitment to the relationship is evident in all cases cited. The couples indicate their love for each other and are prepared to be together irrespective of the present structures and contrary to the cultural and religious expectations that, ideally, a man and a woman should live together as

husband and wife. For example, Tebo and Tiro's life story demonstrates such love and commitment.

The case of Tebo and Tiro

Tebo is a 33-year-old shop assistant who has been cohabiting with her partner Tiro for 11 years. Tiro is a night watchman with a security company in Gaborone. Initially, Tiro was renting a room and staying in Gaborone while Tebo was commuting from Molepolole to Gaborone. After having their child the costs for maintaining the baby and keeping separate residential places proved too much. They had to decide to cohabit to enable them to take care of their baby and to cut costs. Their reason for cohabitation goes beyond just having a baby. Below is a narrative from my interviews with Tebo:

> When I was about two months pregnant, during independence holidays, I went home for the celebrations. My aunt (Mmamane) looked at me with an inquisitive eye and I felt she saw right through me, (she is not married so we were staying in the same homestead and I have been sharing a bedroom with her. I had earlier refused to eat *morogo*). On the 1st of October just when I was getting ready to go back to work in Gaborone, my aunt came in the room as I was bathing and asked me why I had refused to eat. '*Ngwanake, ke eng o ganne morogo maabane, ga o o ratisiwe?*'[29] (My daughter you refused to eat *morogo*[30] yesterday, did you suddenly develop an allergy to it). This loosely translates to 'are you pregnant'? She had caught me off-guard and I admitted that I was pregnant. Since she was also working in Gaborone she suggested that I spend a weekend with her as soon as possible, since any delays would work to my disadvantage as the parents of the man in question might question why we delayed to inform them about the pregnancy. So I went to her place the following weekend. I

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[29] The phrase '*ga o ratisiwe*' is used in Setswana to describe temporary dislike of certain foods/things/illness that are associated pregnancy, e.g. morning sickness, likes/dislikes of certain foods, etc.
[30] A type of traditional vegetable.

explained to her my position with my partner and the pregnancy. She immediately informed my parents. By the time I finished the first trimester my aunt had gone to inform my partner's parents about the pregnancy. At about four months into my pregnancy my partner's parents came to say that they acknowledge the pregnancy and that their son intended to marry me. Nothing then happened until the baby was born, when, again, my parents informed them that a baby boy was born. While I was in confinement, (known as *botsetsi*[31]) my partner sent gifts for the baby. After confinement his aunt and brother came to see the baby bringing some gifts. Overtime it became difficult for me to commute to Gaborone for work and at the same time financially provide for the baby and spend more time with it. My partner decided to send a word to his parents to request that in the meantime I and the baby be allowed to move in with him so that we cut costs. The request was granted since he had already indicated that he intended to marry. In 1997, we started living together in Gaborone. However, as he was working as a security guard, it was difficult for him to raise the money for *bogadi* and at the same time take care of the family. Worse still, he then lost his job in 1999, so he came back to Molepolole and stayed with his parents. He already had a plot of his own, so from his benefits he built the two rooms that you see. From the 'piece jobs' that he was doing he continued to support the baby and me. In 2003, I also came to work in Molepolole and gradually moved in with him. There was no strong objection from the parents. So we have been living together since then and we now have three children. (In 2008, this couple had been living together for 11 years).

This life story demonstrates that although the economic situation is difficult for the couple, they are committed to the relationship and love each other. Moreover, they have a desire to

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[31] *Botsetsi* is a period of confinement usually up to three months or more. A woman who has just given birth is kept in isolation under the care of an elderly woman. Entry to the room in which they are confined is highly restricted.

take care of their baby as a couple. This case presents a different scenario from other cases that have been presented before. The initial reason for the couple to stay together was to share the expenses of urban life in Gaborone and to enable Tebo to be with her baby. However, after her partner lost his job and went back home, he built his own home, Tebo found another job in Molepolole as a shop assistant and instead of going back to her family, she joined her partner together with her children. There is no strong objection from the parents in this case. This means that though parents would prefer marriage instead of cohabitation, where a child has been born they rarely prevent a couple that loves and wants to be with each other from doing so. Parents can be passive too. That the couple has been together for eleven years without any legal obligation demonstrates a certain level of commitment. Love and commitment have therefore become more important for relations than ever before, as discussed in detail by Van Dijk (2004, 2010, 2013, and 2015). For instance, Van Dijk (2015) describes how pastors explicitly inculcate in the minds of young couples the idea of a romantic relationship and he quotes a newspaper report in which a pastor says: 'God doesn't want dull, sexless and conflict-riddled marriages.' Reverend Phillip tells a seminar of young people:

> 'You need to break the routine in your sex life,' he said. 'Be creative. Bring back that initial romance. […] If you are the busy type, set aside a specific day during the week and let nobody, not even your pastor or your children, tamper with that time. When your pastor tells you to come to a meeting, tell him 'sorry pastor, we have a little private arrangement at home and I must be there […]'' (Mmegi….quoted in: Van Dijk 2015: 6).

Therefore love and commitment is a crucial requirement in relationships, even cohabiting ones, for young Batswana today. This may be largely due to the youth's exposure to

globalisation and new relational models, their access to new markets, their access to media and all the images it provides.

5.8 Challenges in cohabitation: Issues of dependency

Though couples in a cohabiting union exercise their agency in order to be able to stay together and raise their children, they do so with a clear understanding of the implications of such a union. Some scholars, as already stated above, perceive cohabitation as a relationship that is clouded with problems. This is largely due to the current legal and social position of the union. This uncertainty is well articulated by some in cohabiting unions. The situation of cohabiting unions is not without challenges as demonstrated by the case below:

The case of Ramosi

Ramosi had been cohabiting with his partner Neo for 21 years in 2008. He says that though on a daily basis it seems okay for them to be living and raising their children together, there are moments that remind him of the fact that he has not given *bogadi*. This makes him feel like a failure. He shares with me a particular incident that took place in July 2006, when his niece was getting married:

> At times I become frustrated and confused. This happens especially during events like when my nieces get married. As the eldest and the only brother to my sisters, I cannot fully play the role of an uncle. Though I financially play the role by assisting my sisters, I cannot be part of the delegation in *patlo* and *go laya* (couple counselling during marriage). In such instances, I have to ask someone who is married to do it for me. As an uncle, one is entitled to at least a beast when their niece gets married. In 2006 when my niece got married, I bought her attire for change during her wedding day as is my responsibility to do so. I also contributed a cow to be slaughtered at the

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wedding since I knew I would get it back from the *bogadi* cattle. However, since I was not married, I could not directly receive the cattle for *bogadi*. So I asked my married cousin to do it for me. As the family receives the cattle for *bogadi*, as an uncle, I can choose one or the ones I want for myself. So when the cattle arrived, my cousin received them, got inside the kraal and chose one for himself, instead of passing it on to me, he kept it for himself. This is despite that he had made a minimal contribution towards the wedding. I didn't want to push and demand that he passes the cow to me because I knew all the elders would remind me to do the right thing: to marry so that I don't have to ask my cousin to play the 'uncle' role again. So it is these few but important occasions that we cohabiting men feel disadvantaged in.

Thus, cohabitation is a relationship that faces a lot of uncertainties, especially in view of the dependencies that people see and that are difficult to negotiate in situations of scarcity. Those entering into it are aware of this. One important question that I posed to the cohabiting couples was whether one can get married legally without the giving of *bogadi* and the consent of parents, since most of them are already over 21. I was surprised by the responses. Most said they believe it can be done. However, they did not want to since 'a marriage without *patlo* or *bogadi* would be without value.' Therefore, though couples enter into cohabiting unions, they do so quite aware of the challenges that face such a union in terms of dependencies relating, in particular to the kinship system. For instance, one man perceived it as follows:

> Yaah, I know we can just get a friend and go to register our marriage *re ya go pega be re folosa* but if you do that and tomorrow you experience problems, *batsadi ba le akgela matsogo.* Parents will just watch and see and they will not intervene. We are afraid that when we just get married without their consent when things go wrong and

we have conflicts and we need parents to reconcile us, they will simply stay out of it. *Dilo tse dia golega nkgonne,* 'these things are complicated my sister'.

(37-year-old cohabiting man)

And another woman:

Oh, that will not be marriage, that will just be marriage on paper because, *Ga o sa batliwa ebile o sa ntshetswa magadi o ngwana. Ga o kake wa tsenelela merero, lenyalo la gago le tla bo le le loleya'* (without *patlo* and the payment of *bogadi* one will always be considered a child and will never take part in adult meetings or consultations. Your marriage will be without value especially during marriage where the unmarried have no room in the negotiations. So, it is better I wait while cohabiting until we have money for *bogadi*. But I am very grateful for having waited because finally I am being rewarded. I am finally getting married.

(40-year-old cohabiting woman)

For men, feelings about cohabitation are centred on not being recognised as men, as can be seen from this quote:

Really, if you do not give *bogadi* you cannot say you are married. *'Mosadi ga se wa gago. Bana gase ba gago fa o sa ba ntshetsa magadi ga se ba gago'* (The woman is not your wife and children are not yours). That marriage will just be just nothing; so, it is better to cohabit until you can marry because if you wait (while cohabiting) then you know you are still owing, but if you officiate the marriage without *bogadi* you will relax but people won't keep quiet about it, especially the wife and her family. They will always remind you that you are not married. *Go lo moo go go diga serite* 'This thing questions your respectability' (41-year-old cohabiting man).

What is implied in these responses is that only marriage can grant one a socially defined and public status of adulthood. Such a status of adulthood is granted by parents. So the power of parents lies in the socially constructed understanding that they alone can grant the status of adulthood at the point of marriage. Therefore, until parents have done *patlo*, one will always be perceived as a child, regardless of their age and the number of children they might have or how much material success one has achieved. Thus, there is more to marriage than just the exchange of *bogadi and patlo.* The involvement of parents has to do with the granting of the status of adulthood. But if marriage is perceived as the only correct relationship, and the only way that a man and a woman can socially be live together, and cohabitation is seen as a relationship with many risks, why do parents condone cohabitation?

5.9 Conclusions

This chapter discusses cohabitation as a heterogeneous relationship. These various forms of cohabitation are products of modernity: migration, formal education, relaxed attitudes and reduced stigma by the society towards childbearing outside marriage and non-marriage.

The implications of these findings for the new kinship studies, as introduced by Carsten (2000), are the 'makeability' of relationships. Kinship or relatedness is elastic, innovative and adaptive. Cohabitation offers a social arena in which all these play out as alternative ways of establishing a family are created. These empirical cases demonstrate the manner in which forms of relationality emerge that broaden the notion of kinship. Cohabitation in its various forms is also a family. This is because, as my field data reveals, through cohabitation, some form of family is developed where sexual relations are established and within which children are born and raised.

CHAPTER 6

6.0 COHABITATION AND INSTITUTIONS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed how cohabitation unions are established by demonstrating how players that are placed in different power relations exercise their agency in the process of establishing them. This chapter explores the impact of different institutions on social behaviour and what literature has been teaching us about cohabitation. Institutions have power (Foucault 1977; Shumway 1992; Dye 1996; Gutting 1994). The powerful institutions of parenthood, church, and chieftaincy are held in high esteem in Botswana. This chapter explores cohabitation in the context of these institutions, with a view to answering the following questions:

(a) What is the manner in which these particular institutions are relevant for the practice of cohabitation?

(b) What power relations are involved and what moralities do these institutions present?

(c) What room is there for the individual and his or her agency?

(d) How does cohabitation centre on theories of recognition and dependencies between parents and their children?

(e) To what extent is cohabitation both a product of institutions as well as a domain for individual agency?

One major debate about institutions comes from the work of Foucault (1977). His view is that the rise of institutions has proved to be effective in disciplining people. Institutions often exercise forms of discipline that are internalised by people in such a way that they begin to act in ways that institutions expect of them. Institutions constitute a process

of internalisation of 'correct' and 'expected' behavior in which deviance becomes increasingly problematic, punishable and subject to correction and intervention. The church, the school, the prison, and the clinic are, in his view, all such institutions meant to inculcate to-be-expected patterns of behaviour in people; a process he also analysed under the rubric of 'governmentality'. For instance, he says of the army and the school that:

> The disciplined soldier begins to obey whatever he is ordered to do; his obedience is prompt and blind; an appearance of indocility, the least delay will be a crime. The training of the school children was to be carried out in the same way; few words no explanation, a total silence interrupted only by signals-bells, clapping […] (Foucault 1977: 166).

By implication, a well-disciplined Christian child and villager, will not cohabit, but marry 'properly'. Therefore the central problematic of this chapter is: to what extent have Christians internalised marriage as an obligation? How much have institutions been successful in inculcating/internalising views on 'appropriate' relationships, thereby also sanctioning relations deemed 'inappropriate'? What has been the role of the church, chieftaincy and parenthood in such discipline? The three institutions of parenthood, the church, and chieftaincy are chosen precisely because of the important roles they play in the different processes of marriage. Parents are at the forefront as they seem to remain responsible for the negotiations that take place to establish a marriage. The church, the *kgotla* and parents may still relate to cohabiting couples although they may not morally accept them.

In the next section, I discuss the importance of recognition and dependencies between parents and their children. Such a discussion is important because, to some extent, it explains why the younger generation, despite having reached all markers of adulthood, do not get married, despite knowing that they can wed before giving *bogadi* and without the consent

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of their parents. They still want to be in a relationship that is recognised by their parents. This social recognition is more important than the legal recognition. This recognition is primarily dependent on their parents.

6.2 Recognition and dependency

The term recognition is here understood to mean an acknowledgement of the existence, validity, or legality of something. Recognition involves '[…] attitudes of taking the other as a person and a possessor of the normative status' (Hans-Christoph & Zurn 2010: 334). In the context of relationships, marriage has enjoyed this type of recognition. Those who are married earn considerable respect, socially and legally. On the other hand, cohabitation has received what Matthias calls 'misrecognition'. Mattias (2013) explains that

misrecognition hinders or destroys a persons' successful relationship with themselves (Fanon 1952 cited in Mattias). This helps to explain why cohabitation is still not socially or legally recognised. For example, there are no laws in place to protect those that are in such relationships. Taylor further explains that recognition constitutes a 'vital human need' (1992: 26). Since the younger generation needs to be recognised and respected by family, they will yearn for marriage even if the circumstances do not allow them to wed.

The desire for a recognised relationship explains why the younger generation in Botswana do not take the initiative and get married without parental consent (in cases where this is difficult to obtain) and the giving of *bogadi* (even if they can get married before the giving of *bogadi*). Heikiki and Laitinen (2011) see 'recognition as a genius consisting of love, respect and esteem.' Therefore, recognition is a term that entails the values of respect and love. Cohabitation appears to fall outside this frame of recognition and hence is labeled as *'go itaola',* literally, unruly behaviour. However, the situation of the younger generation is further complicated by the fact that they are dependent on their parents for this recognition to

take place. This is because parents play a significant role in the process of establishing a relationship that is socially recognised, in this case mainly through the opening of formal negotiations that are known as *patlo,*

Theorists have discussed different types of dependencies (Walker 1992; Gibson 1998; Fraser & Gordon 1994; Fine & Glending 2005). Fraser and Gordon (1994) describe the different meanings of economic, socio-legal, political and moral or psychological dependencies. In relation to marriage arrangements, the extent of children's economic dependencies on the extended family is weakening (Van Dijk 2010) as those getting married incur most of the costs of a wedding these days. However, the younger generation is still dependent on their parents for a social recognition of their marriage. Thus, the legal, moral or psychological dependencies are relevant in the study of marital relationships in Botswana. This makes it a challenge, for instance, to get married without parental involvement, even after reaching the age of 21.

As already discussed, some cohabiting couples are aware that they can get married without the consent of parents and before the giving of *bogadi.* They are, however, reluctant to exercise this power because they still want a relationship that their parents recognise and have participated in establishing.

This study attempts to understand how these powerful institutions relate to cohabitation and how they affect its development. Works of anthropologists (Schapera, Matthews, Kuper) in Southern Africa have demonstrated how the church has, over time, shaped the development of social relationships. Through the study of these social institutions, this study explores how cohabitation is both a product of these institutions and an expression of freedom from the same institutions, while maintaining the inherent authority of parents in terms of establishing marriages.

This chapter starts by exploring the general perceptions of the institutions in relation to cohabitation.

6.3 Cohabitation from an institutional perspective

All three institutions are custodians of marriage as the ideal relationship and therefore want to promote marriage and discourage cohabitation. As already discussed in previous chapters, cohabitation has become a visible social reality in Botswana. As I began my fieldwork, I wanted to understand how cohabitation is perceived by the chieftaincy and the church.

6.3.1 Chieftaincy and cohabitation

I had a meeting with Chief P. I was ushered into a well-furnished, modern office. Chief P sat on a big black leather office chair. He welcomed me warmly. In the process of our interview, he expressed his views on cohabitation, which are reflected in the extract below:

> I do not like cohabitation because I do not understand why young people of today are doing it. And I know they tell you [researchers] that they do it because of *bogadi,* which is not true because one can marry under both systems without *bogadi.* These young people in towns complete schools early and get good jobs in Gaborone and other towns while still young, away from their parents. They then get a house from the government, buy a double bed, not a single one just enough for him, and then they start *boitaolo* (indiscipline).

A number of issues are raised from this extract: one is that cohabitation is a new phenomenon, concurrent and caused by modernity and urbanisation. He uses the word 'today', meaning that, in his view, it is not a phenomenon of the past (irrespective of the fact that, as he may know, cohabitation emerged with the advent of Christianity in Botswana) and

he sees it as a product of recent developments. Chief P clearly states: 'these young people in towns complete school and get good jobs in Gaborone and other towns while still young, away from their parents, get a house from the government, buy a double bed, not a single just enough for him, then starts *boitaolo indiscipline.*' That is, young people today start and finish their education while they are still very young and consequently start working early. They move to towns where employment opportunities are better. All these factors affect parental control (Schapera 1939).

In his view, because of the physical and social distance between villages and towns, once the younger generation moves to urban centres and becomes economically independent, parents are no longer able to control them, both socially and economically, hence the lack of discipline.

I also interviewed *dikgosana* in the two wards where I did my fieldwork and below is what one of them thinks of cohabitation. This is what *kgosana* M had to say:

Go nna mmogo ga monna le mosadi pele ga lenyalo ke boitalo jwa bana ba gompieno. Gore ngwana wa mosetsana a inyadise ga se Setswana (an unmarried boy and girl living together is indiscipline. For a girl to give herself freely to a boy goes against Setswana culture).

The immediate understanding of cohabitation in the *Kgotla* is consistent with the general public usage of the term cohabitation, i.e. that cohabitation is a new phenomenon that is on the rise and problematic, with leaders expressing their disappointment and displeasure at this modern way of courting and establishing families. But why does such a view prevail when statistically more people in Botswana are cohabiting than are married? (Kubanji 2013). I have already stated that the selected institutions are custodians of marriage; therefore, the

notion of chieftaincy also harbours a notion of being guardians of a particular, marginally shared idea of a common set of cultural practices and ideas, known as *ngwao (culture)*. Often, there is little reflection by these guardians for the fact that a particular social construct serves particular interests. This results in a refusal by the older generation and institutions to change. Cohabitation is the product of Christianity in the same way that ethnicity is. Vail (1989) explores how ethnicity was a missionary creation by developing consciousness among Africans about how different they were. This led to alignment along ethnic lines. Vail says that the missionaries created ethnicity in different ways:

> [T]hey reduced spoken language into written language, chose what the 'proper' form of the language would be, thus serving both to further unity (within an ethnic group) and to produce divisions (between different ethnic groups) by establishing firm boundaries; missionaries were instrumental in creating cultural identities through their specifications of 'custom' and 'tradition' and by writing tribal histories; they introduced formal education and the curricula included lessons of ethnic identity, students taught in vernacular; indirect rule also induced ethnicity, the use of traditional African leaders. Ethnicity was created to de-tribalise Africans in order to avoid the danger of territory wide political consciousness that might develop outside tribalism (Vail 1989: 11–13).

Vail demonstrates the effects of the dynamic interaction between Africans and European administrators and missionaries. For instance, for missionaries and colonial administrators in the then Bechuanaland Protectorate, time precision was important, i.e. knowing exactly when an event like marriage had taken place. Shropshire (1946) provides a list of questions that couples that wanted to get married had to answer, including the following: 'At what hour, what day and where do you desire to be married?' (*Ibid.*: 99). Registering of marriages

recorded exactly when a marriage had taken place. This led to the categorisation of marriages into, customary, religious and civil marriages (*Ibid*.) The differences between these marriages were significant. One such difference is that 'marriage by the church is preferred […] because it has endowed woman, often treated as a 'thing' and the means for creating and transferring vested interest and rights, with a sense of dignity and personal liberty'(*Ibid*.). Therefore, though all marriages were legally recognised in the eyes of the people, customary marriages were of less value, especially among those who had access to formal education, the younger generation and those that were economically advantaged.

Like the creation of ethnicity, by disaggregating marriages, missionaries and colonial administrators created divisions in what constituted marriage among Batswana, thereby relegating what was traditionally seen as marriage into cohabitation.

It has been shown statistically that cohabitation surpasses marriage in Botswana today. The above perception on cohabitation might imply that the chieftaincy is not keeping up with modern times. The attitude might also reflect an outdated view of the reality of social life. Moreover, the inherent conservatism of the chieftaincy may have to do with defending its position. One may wonder if the chieftaincy is losing its control in the domain of relations. The above points certainly appear to suggest that this is the case. If so, and beyond the local, how political is the chieftaincy in the higher echelons of the Botswana political system? To what extent is the chieftaincy simply a local aspect of politicking that is marginalised in view of greater political forces and therefore not very representative of how much cohabitation has become a political concern, if at all?

Bogadi *is no impediment to marriage*

Chapter 4 pointed out that in traditional Setswana society, though *bogadi* formed an important part of married life, it did not constitute part of the *patlo* negotiations. A lack of

bogadi could not hinder a marriage from taking place (Matthews 1940). For instance, according to the traditional processes and procedures of Sekwena marriage, *bogadi,* as already discussed, was not a prerequisite to marriage, but what was important were the negotiations between the parents of the couple intending to marry. I also discussed in the same chapter how the same pattern was found in other Setswana-speaking groups like the Barolong (see Matthews, 1940). What I found interesting in my interview with the chief was that he confirmed that, indeed, people stayed together without getting married, and they would generally be regarded as husband and wife, but with limited rights and privileges. However, *patlo* needs to take place for any relationship to be recognised as marriage. So *bogadi* alone could not stop a couple from being considered husband and wife. However, without the giving of *bogadi*, such a marriage would have limited rights (Schapera 1939; Matthews 1940). As evidence that *bogadi* is not an obstacle to marriage, I was presented with a list of marriages that have taken place in one particular year in which more marriages were solemnised without *bogadi* than those in which *bogadi* had been given.

Table 5.1 Marriages that took place in 2007 at the Molepolole Kgotla[32]

Date of marriage	DOB/Age of husband	DOB/Age of wife	No. of *bogadi* cattle	No of children
11/2007	1940 (69)	1961 (43)	8	4
08/2007	1962 (47)	1960 (45)	None	6
05/2007	1948 (61)	1952 (53)	None	6
11/2007	1965 (44)	1973 (32)	8	4
12/2007	1942 (67)	1956 (49)	None	5
07/2007	1934 (75)	1947 (60)	None	5
03/2007	03/04/1957 (52)	1958 (47)	8	3
06/2007	1941 (68)	1943 (62)	None	10
03/2007	1962 (47)	1974 (31)	None	3
01/2007	1957 (52)	1956 (49)	None	7
	Average age at marriage 58	Average age at marriage 48		Average number of children at marriage 5.3

Source: field notes

Table 5.1 shows that, in 2007, ten couples solemnised their marriages at the main *kgotla* in Molepolole. As explained above, Van Dijk has observed that in Molepolole more

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[32] The actual dates and years have been changed to protect the identity of couples, i.e. deleted days and changed months for date of birth and date of marriages

marriages are taking place at the DC's office than at the *kgotla*. Those taking place at the latter are customary marriages of couples who do not register at the DC or at any church. This could suggest that the impact of chieftaincy on relationships has dwindled and, in turn, it may demonstrate the failure of the chieftaincy. It might also demonstrate the general trend for a loss of the chiefs' power that began with colonisation.

However, despite *bogadi* clearly being no impediment to marriage, there is no initiative on the part of the chiefs to discourage cohabitation, on the basis that marriages can indeed take place without the immediate giving of *bogadi*. This implies that marriage at the main *kgotla* has become the exception rather than the norm. Van Dijk explains that '[…] of the, on average, 300 marriages that are registered in Molepolole every year fewer than ten are registered under the customary law at the paramount chief's place' (2012: 198). In most cases, it seems to involve people of lower and poor socio-economic class. The fact that no *bogadi* was involved in these cases may be a strong sign of poverty and of marginalisation. True as this may be, the point this study makes is that there is more to cohabitation than just a lack of *bogadi*. Marriages at the *kgotla* are legally recognised with rights and privileges given to the husband, wife and the children. The question, then, is why would people cohabit when they can actually marry? Why do parents and their children go through the *kadimo* and practice visiting rights when they can legally have a customary marriage, if the couple wants to marry and lack the resources to do so?

At the time of marriage, the average age for men and women was 58 and 48 with the actual years ranging from 43 to 74 and 32 to 60, respectively. This reflects the fact that the couples marrying in customary courts are usually older. From the table, we can deduce that most men were not sure of their date of birth, since only the year of birth is indicated, while all the women apart from no. 2 have a record of their birth date. That most men were not sure of their exact date of birth might indicate that they lack education and, in turn, that they are of

low economic status, i.e. their parents could have been illiterate too and thus unable to not keep a record of the birth.

These couples were not young when they got married at the *kgotla* during this specific year. The fact that they were not young implies that they may well have been living together before marriage. Of all ten couples that got married in 2007, only three had given *bogadi*, i.e. seven got married before giving *bogadi*. This is a further indication of a low socio-economic status. The fact that *bogadi* had not been given for most marriages proves that *bogadi* is not a significant component in the establishment of a marriage. It is, however, important in the social positioning of individuals, as already discussed in the previous chapters. This is consistent with what the chief said, i.e. that *bogadi* alone cannot stop individuals from getting married. But if marriages can actually take place before the giving of *bogadi*, why do parents and their cohabiting children present a lack of resources as the reason for cohabitation?

Another interesting observation is that all the couples that got married at the *kgotla* in this particular year already had children at the point of marriage. This means that the couples might have been living together for a long time before getting married. Since this study did not conduct a follow-up interview with these couples, I can only presume that they were cohabiting before they legalised their marriages. An important analysis of these cases is that one can marry without giving *bogadi* therefore lack of *bogadi* cannot be the sole reason why marriage cannot take place. Thus, if *bogadi* is not the real reason, what is? The possible answer is explored in the next section, in which I discuss the institution of parenthood and cohabitation.

6.3.2 Parenthood and cohabitation

In this section, I describe adulthood as an institution that requires particular qualifications. The socially constructed understanding of adulthood is controlled by parents.

In the process of establishing a culturally accepted marriage, *patlo* and *bogadi* may operate as markers and a ticket into the institution of marriage. Hence, *patlo* and *bogadi* in relation to the concept of adulthood present a particular institutional dynamic that cuts across age, status, economic positioning, gender and so forth.

One of the questions that I asked my informants was whether there was a perceived difference in the quality of the relationship between one who is married and one who is cohabiting. Their responses consistently echoed the statement '*ga o sa batliwa ga o tsenelele merero o nste o ngwana*: if '*patlo* (marital negotiations) has not taken place, then one cannot participate in any marriage negotiations as they are still regarded as a child'. To illustrate this, I share my conversation with Mosu.

Mr. Mosu

Mr. Mosu is a teacher at a secondary school in Molepolole and is cohabiting.[33] He shared with me one of his experiences during the Easter holidays of April 2008[34] and how he had felt insulted because he was not married. A female cousin of his was getting married. He owns a Hilux and a saloon car. So, during the whole process of arrangements, he was fully involved and using both his vehicles and money to do this and that. It is a general practice for a marriage ceremony to have two sessions: one at the bride's place and the other at the groom's place. He is related to the bride. He participated in the *bogadi* negotiations, though he was not married and his parents and relatives never made an issue out of this. He was even allowed to sit at some of the meetings that would otherwise be a reserve for the married. However, during the last leg of the wedding ceremony at the groom's place, he was asked to excuse himself because he was not married. He said he has never felt so embarrassed. *Ke*

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[33] He is staying with his partner in his house but refuses to acknowledge that he is cohabiting since he only accommodated his partner after she had lost her job in Gaborone and had nowhere to stay. He is clear that as soon as she finds a job she will move out. He is cohabiting but finds it shameful to admit. This is most likely because of the negative perception that society has towards cohabitation.

[34] People utilize these Christian holidays for weddings and other family celebrations.

tsaya gore ba ne ba batla go ntirisa fela. (I take it that all along they were just using me). I felt my parents just had me there to use my resources; I feel they took advantage of me.

Mr. Mosu is well-educated, has a good job, is independent of his parents and has accumulated a certain level of property. These qualities are used as markers of adulthood in many societies (Shanahan 2000; Arnett 2000). However, he is not married, therefore, at this particular time, these markers became irrelevant since he has not been socially granted adulthood by his family. He is still considered a minor when a situation that requires a specific type of adulthood arises. This kind of adulthood can only be granted by parents. Research on 'transition to adulthood' states that the transition to adulthood is conceived in terms of 'events' and 'markers', such as completing school, entering the labour force, leaving the parental home, marrying and becoming a parent (Shanahan 2000). These markers seem inadequate, however, when it comes to whether one has fulfilled the socially constructed ideas of adulthood. This makes the younger generation socially and morally dependent on the older generation for the granting of such recognition.

I revisit my conversation with one particular participant, Morutegi. When I asked him why he cannot marry without the consent of parents and *bogadi*, he said:

> Yaa, I know we can just get a friend and go to register our marriage *re ya go pega be re folosa.* But if you do that and tomorrow you experience problems*, batsadi ba le akgela matsogo.* Parents will just watch and not intervene. Such (decisions without the consent of parents) end up making people to commit suicide. We are afraid that if we marry without parental consent when things go wrong and we have conflicts then we need parents to reconcile us and if we did not involve them at the beginning we cannot involve them during problems. *Dilo tse dia golega Kgaitsidake,* these things are complicated my sister.

Mr. Morutegi has been cohabiting with Boitumelo for 20 years and they have a child together, but are still regarded as minors and cannot be sent on specific adult-related errands like, '*go bega tshenyo*. In cases of pregnancy outside marriage, especially if the pregnancy is the first one, the parents of the girl send a delegation of one or two close relatives to go and officially inform the parents of the man involved. The family of the man must compensate that of the pregnant girl. This process of *go bega tshenyo* is important as, in the long run, it is linked to any future marriage. The man and his family then have to pay a charge called '*go tlhaga legora'* (to jump the fence) (Molokomme 1991), a penalty for having a child before marriage. This charge is almost always part of every *bogadi* payment when a child has been born before marriage: as in almost every case a couple who wants to get married will already have a child before marriage (since reproductive fertility must be proven in advance of marriage). Almost all *bogadi* includes at least one extra head of cattle for the jumping-the-fence regulation (Van Dijk 2012). Perhaps crucially, any arrangement concerning cohabitation does not require such an addition. This means cohabitation can also be popular because it escapes having to pay this fine.

This shows us that, in Molepolole, though marriage is viewed as an event that designates adulthood, it is more important who designates adulthood during marriage. Legally one becomes an adult in Botswana at the age of 21, but that does not guarantee acceptance into the current Bakwena socio-cultural definition of adulthood. This adulthood is granted by parents. The social construction of adulthood means that the parents can withhold the granting of adulthood and refuse to recognise cohabitation as it fails in the characteristics of what an accepted form of family entails. That is, despite being of legal age, if a couple does not have the resources to give *bogadi* then the couple cannot be granted adult status. The younger generation is reluctant to take advantage of the constitutional definition of adulthood

and marry without their parents' consent. When discussing the importance of family in relation to power, Dye says that: 'At the base of power relationship in society is the family or kinship. Power is exercised, first of all, within the family […] division of labour […]' (1996: 40).

During the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews, I asked my interlocutors if it was possible to marry without the giving of *bogadi*. I was surprised because most participants are aware that one can actually marry under both the customary law and the Roman-Dutch law without *bogadi*, if parents have agreed, but are not very keen to do so. However, with further probing of individual cohabiting couples, both economic and non-economic reasons were given for this reluctance. The previously mentioned Setho was one such informant. On the evening of 3 March 2008, I had supper at her place with her family. Her husband was not at home. He works in Orapa and usually comes home on the last weekend of the month after getting his salary. So, I asked her why, since she knew that they could get married without *bogadi*, did they opt to cohabit instead. Setho (at this point she had been cohabiting for 18 years. She later got married on 28 March 2008) said:

> Oh! that will not be marriage, that will just be marriage on paper because, *Ga o sa batliwa ebile o sa ntshetswa magadi o ngwana ga o kake wa tsenelela merero. Lenyalo la gago le tla bo le le loleya'* (without *patlo* and the payment of *bogadi* one will always be considered a child and will never take part in adult meetings or consultations, your marriage will be without value) especially during marriage where the unmarried have no room in the negotiations. So, it is better I wait while cohabiting until we have money for *bogadi.* But I am very grateful that I waited because finally I am being rewarded. I am finally getting married.

Bogadi, here, is perceived by the informant as very important in giving 'value' to the marriage. The same sentiments were also expressed by men. For most men, though they might marry without *bogadi,* they would feel that doing so would mean *ga ke monna tota* (I am not a real man).

Mositeng became my informant after the male focus group discussion in Lokgwapheng. This 28-year-old man is cohabiting with his girlfriend at her parents' place. He has been granted visiting rights. So, I posed the same question to him, why is he not married when he knows that he can marry without *bogadi*? He said:

> You know these things; at times it is not easy to take such decisions. *Tota fa o sa batlelwa mosadi ebile o sa ntsha bogadi* 'Really if patlo has not taken place and you have not given *bogadi* you cannot say you are married'. *'Mosadi ga se wa gago. Bana gase ba gago ga o sa ba ntsetsa magadi ga se ba gago'* 'The woman is not your wife and children are not yours. That marriage will just be just nothing, so it's better to cohabit until you can marry because if you wait (while cohabiting) then you know you are still owing but if you officiate the marriage without *bogadi* you will relax but people won't keep quiet, especially the wife and her family. They will always remind you that you are not married. *Go lo moo go go diga serite.* This thing questions your integrity.

It is apparent that the economic reasons cited are not always the /most important reason why people choose to cohabit. It seems there is more concern for social recognition and the granting of adulthood than the actual act of getting married. Through social arrangements, parents participate in establishing a relationship, thereby acknowledging it and, in the process, the individuals in such a relationship earn respect and dignity. The young couple

knows very well that they depend on the cooperation of their parents for this to be achieved. Setho explains that without *patlo* and *bogadi,* one cannot be an adult, since the parents would not have been involved in granting adult status. Mositeng gives a gender perspective when he argues that unless *patlo* and *bogadi* take place a man cannot fully have a wife and children. Therefore, the fact that the youth are not utilising the available legal provision has more to do with the significance of the involvement of parents than the mere absence of resources. This signals that the authority of parents remains crucial. Shropshire (1946), in his study among some ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) and South Africa, observed that though legal marriages can be established by a magistrate, such a marriage cannot attain any social recognition if the parents were excluded from arrangements. Shropshire explains that a civil marriage without the consent of parents:

> [I]s regarded as marriage without dignity and honour. Many Africans look upon such couples with scorn. Those who marry by civil marriage do so because they pay almost nothing […] because native boys and girls are married at magistrates' court in great numbers without the consent of parents, naïve people regard civil marriages as legalized immoral marriage (1946: 68–69).

He further explains that the young couples who opted to solemnise their marriage without the consent and involvements of parents were accused of choosing civil marriages precisely to avoid their marriage obligations, which removes the sanctity of (African) marriages (Shropshire 1946).

It has been observed (Settersten 2000) that many laws and policies structure rights, responsibilities and entitlements on the basis of age. It is from this emphasis on age that the ages of 18 and 21 are often given as the ages of adulthood, because they are embedded in

laws and signal the acquisition of legal rights and responsibilities, i.e. the right to vote, drink, marry, or have consensual sex. My fieldwork suggests, however, that such legal adulthood markers are inadequate for explaining why the youth in Molepolole are reluctant to take advantage of their age and marry on their own, in situations where the consent and cooperation of adults becomes a problem, or where resources do not enable the giving of *bogadi*. This is a particular type of adulthood that only parents can grant and which the young find indispensable. Therefore, despite modern developments, which have created and expanded the divide between generations, one of the outcomes of which was the loss parental control (Schapera 1939), when it comes to becoming an adult in Botswana, parents still play a very important role. Though the youth still desire autonomy from the authority of their parents, this does not mean that parental authority is dwindling as the youth still consider their parents very important in aspects of their lives. Rather than being a relationship of discipline and control, this is a relationship of recognition and dependency. Why is this the case? One thing that emerges is that the youth are dependent on their parents socially and morally.

This work argues that from a socio-cultural perspective, age and other transition markers stop being relevant at the point when adulthood is granted by parents. Albrow (1990) argues that the perceived advantages of obeying parents and the desire to avoid the disadvantages of not obeying may compel children to be obedient. Albrow further explains that 'power is normally structured in social relationships in a particular way, namely that one or more persons accept commands from others' (Albrow 1990: 167). The children in his study provided much evidence that in child-parent relations, parents tend to exercise more power over children, and as Foucault reminds us, '[w]here there is power, there is resistance' (1979: 95). Children not only have strategies for counteracting adult power over their lives, but they are also active agents with an ability to assert power over adults (Valentine 1999),

even though such power tends to be limited and constrained. Therefore, children will navigate and incorporate their parents in negotiating cohabitation, as demonstrated in Chapter five. While belief in legitimacy[35] was a major factor in enhancing the stability of a social order, for a longer time, individuals were oriented towards it in terms of expediency, either from fear of the consequences if they departed from it, or due to the advantages they perceived from conforming (Punch 2005).

Parenthood, as an institution in this regard, has power over the younger generation. Dye says of power that:

> Power is exercised over individuals and groups by offering them things they value or by threatening to deprive them of those things. These values are the power base and they can include physical safety, health and well-being; jobs and means of livelihood […] social recognition, status and prestige […] a satisfactory self-image and self-respect (Dye 1996: 3).

The extracts above demonstrate the fear that the younger generation has of losing social recognition and being granted adulthood status if they marry without due cooperation of their parents. Cooperating with parents, by cohabiting while waiting to get resources that will enable them to marry properly, demonstrate the power that the older generation has over the younger one.

Generally, my data suggests that there is a thinking among cohabiting youth that, it is more important to the young generation for parents to do the *'patlo'* and the payment of *bogadi* than for them to simply marry at the DC. This is consistent with the argument that Albrow and Dye raise, that obedience or conformity to the desire of parents at times is done

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[35] Punch (2005) argues that children not only adhere to parents' wishes as they respect their authority, but also because they fear the consequences of not doing so. Therefore children feel the authority of parents is legitimate.

out of the expectations that one derives by conforming and the fear of the disadvantages that one experiences if they do otherwise. Setho, above, preferred to cohabit for 18 years than just marry without *patlo* and *bogadi* because for her 'that would not be marriage'. Marriage without *patlo* would just be marriage on paper, since her parents would not acknowledge it. Such a marriage would not mean anything to her. Mositeng reveals some of the negative impacts that might arise from getting married without the cooperation and consent of parents. So, it is indeed important that parents participate and grant one the status of 'adulthood' and recognise a relationship as marriage. This then leads to youth cohabiting and navigating their own way of establishing their families through cohabitation.

Literature (Honwana 2014) points out that youth are generally perceived in Africa as *having* a problem and as *being* a problem, and that this results in them having to navigate very different and contradictory positions. Honwana (2012) uses the term 'waithood' to describe how the youth are increasingly finding themselves in a social space that acts as a waiting-room for adulthood. This social space seems to become ever longer due to socio-economic circumstances. Waithood has much to do with the time and the circumstances of being able to gain full rights. It also runs as an accusation vis-à-vis the older generation. The older generation can be accused of being immoral as it keeps the younger in bondage by delaying to grant the younger generation the status of being an adult. Cohabitation, in this sense, can also be interpreted as a resistance movement that wants to attack an immoral generational arrangement. Of the anticipated disadvantages of non-conformity, Mositeng shows the fear the young generation has if they make use of the available legal system to marry without the cooperation or participation of parents. Mositeng explains that he is aware that he can actually engage his friends as witnesses and get married. He is, however, afraid that if he does that, then in future when he experiences problems in his marriage, his parents will not intervene. Since it is parents that provide guidance and counseling to married

couples. It can be argued, however, that guidance and counseling are simply positive terms for moral control, exploitation and disempowerment. The withholding of rights certainly results in disempowerment and disenfranchisement. Mokomane (2005b) aptly observes that 'although couples have the option of getting married under general law, few people would go ahead and get married without the approval of both extended families'. Why is it that the youth in Botswana still find the involvement of their parents into their marital life important? It is largely because the performance of customary marriage rites grants the status of adulthood and enables recognition of such a relationship. It ensures social support and acceptance by parents as well as the receipt of many other social advantages of an approved relationship. Mositeng sums up his opinion thus: 'so it's better to cohabit until you can marry […] *Go lo moo go go diga serite*'. Marriage is a public affair that makes visible status and respect, thus conferring public status and dignity. Molepolole society is about the economics and politics of respect in the public domain; cohabitation is not a public affair, hence cannot generate public visibility. Mokomane sums this up as:

> […] if parents, for whatever reason are disinterested or uncooperative in facilitating a marriage, most couples would rather wait and hope that the parents will change their mind, allowing them eventually to marry. Until such a point some couples choose cohabitation as the next best alternative to marriage (Mokomane 2005a: 205).

This study has demonstrated that the individual and economically independent youth still desires the authority of their parents for the definition of their adulthood. Foucault reasons in the opposite direction, arguing that institutions are interested in making sure that people act in the way they are expected to act through processes of the internalisation and inculcation of power relations and self-fashioning. Although youth can be seen to conform to and confirm

patterns of behaviour in relation to the ways in which institutions expect them to behave, they have not learned anything otherwise, so to speak, and are socialised in this manner. It does not say much about what the youth really want or desire, since there is no space for them to voice this; indeed, they have been socialised against doing just that. How, then, can we come to a more independent assessment of the power of the older generation and the disempowerment of the youth? How can we know that this desire is real?

On the one hand, the younger generation are reluctant to make use of the available options and marry without the consent of parents or marry without the giving of *bogadi*. This demonstrates that indeed they have internalised the power relations and socialisation processes that have taught them what a 'proper' marriage is and how to go about it. On the other hand, cohabitation challenges the positive power that Foucault sees as a social product, as the younger generation acts against the social expectation and establishes unions that are not consistent with social expectations. He also acknowledges that there is no power without resistance. Hence, cohabitation to challenge the status quo, by establishing unions that appear to simultaneously conform to and contradict with the social expectation that everyone should get married.

The other institution of importance is the church. Christianity (as already discussed above) has had a great impact on the lives of Batswana. The next section therefore explores how the church views cohabitation.

6.3.3 Church and cohabitation

I will now turn to the churches and their experiences and perceptions on cohabitation. The study surveyed a number of churches belonging to the three types of Christianity found in the area under study. The general perception held by the church is represented below by Pastor U from one mainstream church:

I am very worried about what our young people are doing these days. It is not proper to just stay together like that. Sex is God ordained and should be done within the right context. *Setho se ineetse thata mo sesheng* 'Traditional culture has given in too much to modernity.

Below is an extract of my interview with one pastor from a Pentecostal church. His view is consistent with those of the mainstream churches and African Independent churches that formed part of the research. This conversation was tape-recorded:

Literature suggests that cohabitation is on the rise in Botswana, what are your views on that?

Pastor A: Yes, this is a major concern and is a problem that the society is facing. A couple will just decide to stay together, may be for three years, share property, and based on the property accumulated, a conflict will arise when the relationship comes to an end. This is sad because it is the women who usually lose, and it becomes very bad if children were already born in such a relationship.

As a pastor would you say this problem is only outside the church or there are also such cases in the church?

Pastor A: Sekeresete ga se letle bonyatsi. Christianity does not allow concubinage. We encourage marriage, monogamous marriages. And in the church, we preach against cohabitation.

***Ehe le rurifatsa gore le ruta kgatlhanong le go nna mmogo ga baratani pele ga lenyalo, ka go reng le ruta kgatlhanong le cohabitation?* So, you really make sure that you preach against cohabitation. If cohabitation is not a problem, why do you preach against it?**

Pastor A: We see things happening *mo setshabeng* in the society and so we need to guide our people. *Tota*, really, we touch on a number of moral issues in our preaching and male female relationships is one of the topics that we talk about

So, you wouldn't say cohabitation is a situation that you find in your church?

Pastor A: *Tota motho ga a itsiwe e se naga. (a Setswana idiom)* you can never really know the other person. I do not know anyone who is cohabiting in the church, *Ga ke itse ope yo o inyadisitseng mo kerekeng mo.* But judging by the number of children born out of wedlock and single parents that have never married, it is possible that cohabitation is taking place.

But would you say single parenthood is a challenge in your church?

Pastor A: Yes, we do have such cases; [Silent for a moment] it's a pity that some of my children let such things happen to them.

How do you then address such an issue?

Pastor: We excommunicate them for a period of time after which they go through counseling but some just stop coming to church.

Suppose one of your church members admits that they are cohabiting, how would you address that?

Pastor: They will have to undergo counselling with the objective of showing them the way God wants us to relate as man and woman in sexual matters. If possible we will also invite the other partner or visit them at their place to encourage them to legalise their relationship. You know personally I sympathise with those who are cohabiting. Though I am against cohabitation I understand and appreciate that sharing of goods when one partner dies is a problem, especially for women. *Nte ke go fe sekai* 'let me give you an example,' You see this family headship issue, issues of equality, though I am against it I appreciate the new developments that the law brings to improve the

status of women. The emphasis of modern equality in the home is against the biblical teaching on the relationship between men and women.

The above extract demonstrates some of the challenges that his church is facing today. He intimates other problems that his church is confronting, like issues of gender equality, which he thinks are challenging the biblical teaching of a man being the head of the family. But he appreciates that some of these changes are necessary today; for instance, he says on issues of gender equality: 'I appreciate the new developments that the law brings to improve the status of women.' However, the pastor is also mindful of the practical challenges that befall women in cohabiting unions, as he says: 'Though I am against cohabitation I understand and appreciate that sharing of goods when one partner dies is a problem, especially for women.' Though his church does not condone cohabitation, it does see the consequences for individuals in such relationships. It must be noted here that the number of cases of cohabitation known to the church are few, therefore I present exceptions, as most cohabiting couples would not be open to the leadership about their cohabiting status. However, the fact that that the church reports few cases of cohabiting couples creates a paradox. While statistics show that cohabitation is the most common form of relationship in Botswana, the exceptionalism in church becomes oxymoronic. If churches are so popular in Botswana and if cohabitation is so popular there must be a significant overlap between the two; claiming anything else would be a paradox. The question is, why is the moral regime of the churches such that this reality can be denied? Why are pastors shocked about something they know all too well?

The extract below demonstrates how, at times, pastors are shocked at the extent to which some church members do not live up to the Christian ideals that they have been taught.

Pastor B recounted how one day after the sermon, he asked his congregants to come forward for prayer requests concerning marriage. He was surprised to see one lady, T come forward. T had been coming to church in the company of a gentleman, Y, whom the pastor had assumed was the husband. After the service, Pastor B asked T about her prayer request. T explained that Y was not her husband and that they are not married. He is the father of their children and they are living together. T explained that she wants God to help her so that Y will marry her. After this revelation, the pastor counselled the couple. He involved their respective parents in order to help the couple transform their cohabiting union into a marriage.

This demonstrates the extent of the powers that the institutions of the church and parenthood hold in terms of disciplining and sanctioning the couple. This incident suggests that the extent of cohabiting couples in the church might not be fully realised and some relationships might go unnoticed by the church leadership. However, in instances where they are picked up, the church tries to make right what they presume is wrong.

Ways of addressing cohabitation in the church

But why is the pastor so surprised when cohabitation is so high in Botswana? How have the churches been able to conceal such an obvious reality? Table 2 in chapter 1 demonstrates an insignificant difference among Christians who are married and those cohabiting. The table reflects that, on average, of all Christians of marriageable age, 57.8% and 53.9% of Christian males and females, respectively, never married; 20.4% and 18.5% of Christian males and females, respectively, are married; while 19.5% and 19.8% of Christian males and females, respectively, are cohabiting.

I introduced the subject by asking pastors and church leaders to share their views on cohabitation. All concur with the view that there is a significant rise in cohabitation. They also admit that cohabitation is creeping into the church as well. However, different types of

Christian churches deal with cohabitation differently. While some are more tolerant, others are totally against cohabitation as we shall see as this chapter progresses. The churches largely view cohabitation as a new development that is concurrent with what they perceive as modernisation and as the general moral decay that is affecting society at large. However, while everybody wants to be modern and have a modern life, modernity seems to come with moral issues.

All church denominations agree that they are aware of cases of cohabitation both outside the church and inside the church, of course to differing degrees. While Pentecostal and mainstream churches take a strong stand against cohabitation, African Independent Churches (AICs) are more accommodating. It is important to note that, generally, churches do not allow cohabitation, but once it has happened, some African Independent Churches take no further action.

Cohabitation and African Independent Churches

Pastor T of one AIC discussed a recent case where a couple[36] in his congregation has been cohabiting for 25 years. Addressing the couple's cohabitation in church, Pastor T misquoted a scripture from the book of Genesis, 'what God has put together let no man put asunder.' When I asked him how God would have brought the couple together while they are cohabiting he said *'ga batho ba setse ba kopane, madi a bone a kopane, ebile a dumalana ke gone ba ntse mmogo, ga ne Modimo a sa ba kopanya nkabo ba kgaogane'* that is, 'Once people have had sex, their blood has become one and it relates well. That is why they are still together, so in a way God has brought them together, otherwise they will not have moved in and stayed together'. He refers to the ritual practice of *Nama ya tshiamo* that is done for the married couple (Van Dijk, 2012) to justify his acknowledgement of cohabitation in church,

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[36] This couple are my cohabiting informants and they told me recently (11/02/2010) that after talking with me about cohabitation they realised that they wanted to get married. There were so comfortable with cohabitation and have never talked about their living arrangement for years, so revisiting that gave them an opportunity to think again about their relationship and so they decided to get married.

despite it being inconsistent with Christian teaching. *Nama ya tshiamo* is a ritual performed during a marriage ceremony in which 'a special meat called *Nama ya tshiamo* (meat of righteousness/fullness/wellbeing') […] a piece of meat that allows for the literal consummation of marriage […]' (Van Dijk 2012: 147) is prepared for and eaten by the bride and the groom in order to 'make blood relations possible between husband and wife and between the couple and their off-spring' (*Ibid.*). Once the blood has mixed, cohabitation, though not generally acceptable, is tolerated.

Secondly, Pastor T explains that, at times, he is unable to act; for instance, when the couple tells him that their parents know that they are living together. In such a case, the pastor will just treat the couple as it is without interfering '*go tla bo go itsiwe mo kerekeng gore ba nna mmogo*', that is, 'the church will be aware that the couple stays together. However, it becomes a problem when one of them later comes in with someone else'. In such a case, they make it clear that such a relationship is fornication and they cannot tolerate it because it brings conflicts in the church. However, it was unclear how they actually deal with the situation. Pastor M belongs to another African Independent Church. Pastor M said that, for him and his church, whether someone is cohabiting or not is a matter between the individual and God. He quoted a scripture in which a woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus to be stoned. Jesus told the crowd that only someone who considers him/herself sinless could throw the first stone at the woman. Nobody did; this therefore implied that we are all sinners and not in a position to pass judgement on others. While these pastors do not favour cohabitation, they condoned it. AICs are in a better position to grant respectability to cohabiting couples. Their stand is consistent with the general mandate of African Independent churches, whose aim is to incorporate African tradition in Christianity. These are churches that originate from Africa and are founded by Africans (Daneel 1987; Turner 1967).

Cohabitation and Pentecostal churches

A different view is presented when exploring cohabitation in the Pentecostal churches. They have a clear way of dealing with cases of cohabitation presented before them. Although they did not provide statistics of cohabiting couples in their various churches, they have some specific cases that they clearly remember. Pastors of two Pentecostal churches, (Pastor F and Pastor B) concur that once they are aware of such a case, first the couple is taken through counselling, where the church clearly explains the stand of the church and Christianity concerning male-female sexual relationships. The emphasis is that sex outside marriage is a sin, but that God is forgiving. The couple is encouraged to legalise the union, and they are advised to separate until that is done. Pastor B emphasises the seriousness of the situation when he explains to me that he makes the couple aware that God forgives and restores, but the price for restoration can be high, as high as the couple having to separate briefly in order to correct the situation. However, church leaders concur that this procedure is a challenge to the couples: some do take the advice, while others disappear from the church. It is possible that some might just decide to conceal their relationship. They explained that it is not always possible to know what people are up to after church, so unless someone explains their situation to the leadership, it is not always clear what their status is.

As already explained, the church does not find it easy to adequately resolve issues of non-marital unions, as reflected by the following extrapolated extract from an interview with a pastor from one Pentecostal church. This is about a couple that, during my fieldwork, were undergoing counselling at the church and at the local counselling centre:

Keaikitse and his partner Mpho are an elderly couple who blame their parents for the delay of their marriage. Their explanation is that when they realised that they were not able to pay *bogadi* so they could have a wedding, they suggested that they just get married at the DC without *bogadi*. However, their parents and relatives could not

accept that, especially the lady's brothers and uncle. When, finally, they wanted to start the process, a further delay took place, this time due to the constant occurrence of death in the family. Both parents of the Mpho and her uncle died within a short time of each other. Keaikitse's father also passed away around the same period. Mpho's siblings are married and had moved away from the homestead. So Mpho was the one left in the family home. With these frequent deaths in the family, the financial circumstances of the Mpho were affected, since her parents were no longer there to help her. When Keaikitse suggested that while waiting to get married he wanted to 'borrow' her, his proposal was not rejected, as was the case when the parents were still alive. At the same time, the couple worships at the same Pentecostal church in Molepolole. When the church realised that the couple was cohabiting, they were advised to live separately while preparing for marriage. They agreed to live apart. The man moved out and rented a room elsewhere in the ward. He was the one with some source of income from the piece jobs that he had as a builder. The separation meant that he had to buy groceries for himself and his partner and children. In addition to buying food for the two households he also had to pay rent. This was becoming too expensive for him. Staying in separate dwellings meant that the man's responsibilities were doubled. They eventually moved back in together without telling the pastor. They made the pastor believe that they were living separate lives while in fact they were still living together.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, the couple had finally made practical efforts to get married and the wedding was scheduled to take place in April 2008. The couple had started gathering items for *patlo.* They asked me to buy one of the blankets needed among the items for *patlo.*

The drive by the church to inculcate expected behaviour is evidence of institutional power. It is important here to note the disciplinary aspect of the institution, i.e. asking the couple to stay in separate homes. Faced with the impossible practical demands by the church to stay in separate abodes, the couple finds themselves having to tussle between complying with their religious beliefs and their practical situation, which does not economically allow them to operate two families simultaneously. They try to conform, fail and then start to live together again but to conceal it from the pastor. These challenges of cohabiting Christians reflect some of the practical difficulties that eventually make couples take decisions that they know are against Christian ethics. The parents of this couple had refused to allow them to marry without *bogadi*, which put them under financial duress. These institutions display a range of moral judgments that manifest in messages demanding behavioral change. Many of these messages have crypto-Christian ideologies and are often far from devoid of Christian moralities. They are often in no way 'neutral', irrespective of how much the institutions see themselves as being ideologically neutral. From the perspective of these institutions, cohabitation may easily be seen as 'jeopardising' safe sex strategies or behavioral change strategies, meaning that cohabiting couples are then pushed to defend themselves or to feel 'guilty'.

The other question that I posed to the church leadership was how they relate to children from these cohabiting unions, and how they address issues of death should their 'cohabiting' congregant lose his/or her partner. They pointed out that children are innocent and they will not be discriminated against. They are treated like any other child in the church. They are given an opportunity to make their own decision about their faith when old enough to do so. One specific question that I posed was 'how would you react if a known cohabiting mother brings her child for dedication in the church?' With some degree of discomfort, one pastor said they would refuse to dedicate the child because the parents would not have

conceived the child within marriage. The church would, however, accept the child until the child makes their own decision to accept Jesus as their personal saviour.

Similarly, if a member known to be cohabiting loses a partner, the church will not help the member in the same way as they would a member who has lost a spouse. For instance, they would offer counseling and prayers, but would not give financial assistance or conduct the funeral. They would even explain to the parents why they are not participating in the funeral. This illustrates the disciplining and sanctioning aspects of the institution.

When defining the power of institutions, Dye says that 'power is a relationship among individuals, groups or institutions […] a relationship in which some individuals, groups or institutions have control over resources valued by others; wealth; economic power, prestige, recognition, respect […]' (1996: 3). In Botswana, proper burial of the deceased is very important. One benefit of being a respected and recognised member of a church is the assurance of a proper burial. So, when the church withdraws proper burial for couples that are cohabiting in the event that a partner dies, it is using its institutional power to enforce discipline on members.

Let me revisit the case of Nkokonyane to shed light on the complexities that Christians face. The self-identification of these respondents as Christians cannot be taken at face value; it may be more nominal than real and may have more to do with social distinction, status and prestige than with commitment to any particular set of moral injunctions. So how do you deal with such identity markers in a critical manner to understand what people actually mean to say? They may never attend church, may not be affiliated to anything, may not feel that church-based injunctions apply to them, and they may not even be in contact with a pastor:

Nkokonyane has been a dedicated member of the Assemblies of God Church. When she started getting sexually active she stopped going to church. Then her boyfriend asked her to join him in his church, the International Pentecostal Church. Here her religious obligation of no premarital sex was rekindled and she decided to abstain until marriage. However, her boyfriend was not happy about her now strong religious stance. This she did for three years. Finally, the boyfriend could not take it and married another girl. Since then, Nkokonyane has stopped going to church and vows that she will never deprive her partner of sex if he wants it. She is now cohabiting and will do anything to sexually satisfy the men in her life. The second one left her with a baby. Her decision concerning her current relationship seems to have been influenced by her past experiences. She is currently cohabiting with a man younger than her who is not employed.

She is easily swayed by what the men in her life want. She seems unable to take a decision that is primarily beneficial to her. It seems there is a difference between the ideal and practice. The difficulty lies no matter what a pastor teaches, preaches or counsels, some individuals find it difficult to turn this knowledge into the desired changes in behaviour; that is, while pastors pretend to know and pretend to have the authority to superimpose 'knowledge' on their subjects, these subjects know how to run their affairs and may feel that the pastors are ignorant about reality. The agency exercised by individuals who evaluate their practical situations and knowingly take a decision that is contrary to their religious ethics, by opposing what their pastors preach to them, reflects unequal social relations, of disciplining, power and control by the institutions.

-6.4 Conclusions

Parenthood, the church and chieftaincy are powerful institutions and play different but important and, at times, complementary roles in social relations. These institutions superimpose certain moralities that some of subjects find difficult to uphold in times of socio-economic challenges. These challenges are accompanied by a weakening social fibre as relatives find it increasingly difficult to help each other out financially. As more and more youth find it difficult to marry due to financial constraints, more parents demand the giving of *bogadi* in order for them to enter into marriage negotiations. This means parents then withhold certain privileges that the young generation desires from them. Churches demand a high level of moral discipline, which the youth find difficult to comply with. Foucault points out the disciplinary nature of religion when he asserts that, 'for centuries, the religious orders had been masters of discipline: they were the specialist of time, the great specialist of rhythm and regular activities' (1977: 150). As a result of the church's desire for time precision and demanding the exact date when a marriage is said to have taken place as well as demanding the giving of *bogadi* at marriage, the church has contributed to a rise in cohabiting unions. By withholding certain privileges from couples who cannot afford marriage, parents similarly contribute to the increase in cohabiting unions. Faced with the demands of the institutions that the youths cannot meet in terms of what is proper marriage, the youth exercise agency and establish unions that the institutions generally regard as immoral. This chapter therefore concludes by noting that, to a large extent, cohabitation is both a product of institutions as well as the domain of individual agency.

CHAPTER 7

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter has four sections. Section one recapitulates the theoretical background of the study and the problem. The second part presents the summary and synthesis of findings. The third explores the possible implications of cohabitation in terms of the developments in relationships in Botswana, and the last part provides the conclusions of the study.

7.2 Recapitulation of the theoretical background of the study and the problem

The key debates in this study are centered on critiquing the structural-functionalist approach to the study of relationships. The structural-functionalist approach holds that the society will uphold specific institutions as long as they serve a particular function in society. The functions of specific institutions are affected by the developments that take place. Many developments and changes have taken place in Southern Africa that have affected male-female relationships.

The winds of change that were brought by Christianity and colonisation led to developments that created a new type of marriage. Christianity was against polygamous and other forms of marriages that, until then, had been accepted among Batswana. Christianity advocated for monogamous marriage. Another factor that has contributed to a change in the meaning of marriage is colonisation, which called for the registration of marriages. At this point, the church demanded that before a marriage could take place and be registered and *bogadi* must be paid. This action changed the timing of *bogadi:* while previously, one could get married without giving *bogadi* first, the church required it to be given in order that the union be registered and the marriage could take place in a church. This action excluded the

poor from participating in marriage. Colonisation also brought with it new possibilities of means of production and labour migration. Formal education was introduced, giving the younger generation new life possibilities: the economic dependency of the younger generation on the older generation has weakened; the rise of childbirth before marriage is growing; the stigma associated with premarital childbirth and female-headed households is also weakening. The young generation, especially women, began to shun polygamous marriages and preferred monogamous unions, or indeed to remain unmarried and raise their children.

The agents of change resulted in a new definition of what marital relationships should and should not be. The effects of Christianity and colonisation gave rise to new meaning making: this was done by creating in the minds of people a particular type in which males and females should relate in order to acknowledged as married, directly and negatively conflicting with some African traditionally accepted ways of marriage (polygamy, marriage without demand for *bogadi* as a pre-requisite). Another development that has taken place in male-female relationships is the rise in cohabitation. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, today in Botswana increasing numbers of people of marriageable age are not married but cohabiting. As it becomes more difficult to marry, some individuals exercise their agency to negotiate and circumvent the cultural expectation that everyone should marry. The interplay of power relations and agency between the older and younger generation results in the creation of different types of cohabiting unions in Botswana. Cohabitation becomes an arena within which agency and power, recognition and dependencies play out. Despite the statistical fact that cohabitation is on the rise, cohabiting unions continue to be stigmatised due to the moral views and heteronormativity of both Christianity and Setswana culture, which teach that childbirth should only take place between male and females and within marriage. In the process, this creates the idea that marriage is the only relationship that is

worthwhile and that other forms of union are deviant. This study addressed the question of why social research has tended to follow this conformative image of how relationships ought to be, rather than examining different forms of relationships on their own account. This leads to what I have called methodological nuptialism.

7.3 Summary and synthesis of findings

The processes involved in the establishment of cohabiting unions are different, hence such unions are not homogenous. The differences lie in the extent to which parents are involved or not in the processes leading to the establishment of a cohabiting union. The findings reveal that what is consistent among all cohabiting unions is that they are usually formed as a result of a pregnancy. Once a pregnancy has occurred, couples decide to stay together so that they can raise their child together. Secondly, couples have a desire to get married and stay together but, for different reasons, they are not able to do so. The principal factor that is cited by most informants is lack of financial resources. However, other reasons are non-financial, like the absence of a father or lack of willingness by the extended family to engage in marriage negotiations.

Does cohabitation threaten or strengthen the authority of parents? It has been argued that cohabitation questions the authority of parents (Schapera 1939). However, by disaggregating the cohabiting unions, this study has demonstrated that this is not always the case. In some cases, cohabitation actually conforms to the authority of parents. Though youths are aware that they can legally marry at the age of 21 without necessarily involving their parents, they choose to wait as only parents/the older generation can bestow the socially accepted status of adulthood and, in the process, acknowledge and recognise their union.

Institutions of family, church and the *kgotla* are influential and are generally against cohabitation. These are the institutions that are the custodians of culture and therefore ideally support married life.

7.4 Implications of cohabitation on relationships in Botswana

The nature of marital relationships is dynamic, reacting according to the changes that take place in society. As reflected in Chapter 1, in historical perspective marriage in Africa was almost compulsory. This was a society where the means of production was entirely dependent on nature and labour. The source of labour was only to be found within the family and therefore large families were the norm. This could be arrived at by marrying several wives who, in turn, gave birth to many children who provided labour: wealth correlated to the size of family. However, with the introduction of the labour market, which allowed for the sale of labour outside the family, a new economy emerged that resulted in large families being a liability not an asset. Along with this new economy came Christianity and formal education, which made polygamous marriages 'illegal' and less appealing. Therefore, a change in family life, from polygamy to monogamy, emerged. Simultaneously, a new development in family formation occurred in which more and more children were being born out of wedlock. While initially this was unheard of in Southern Africa and there was a strong stigma attached to having a child outside marriage, such stigma is now waning. As society moves forward, worldwide increases in cohabitation are observed alongside decreasing rates of marriage. In Botswana, the last three censuses reflect an increase in cohabitation (Molokomme 1991; Mokomane 2005a; Kubanji, 2013) that is accompanied by a decrease in marriages rates and an increase in divorce cases. Does cohabitation have anything to do with the decline in marriage? Is it not a stage in the development of human relationships that calls for acceptance and changes in the laws in Botswana to address this emerging social reality?

Further quantitative and qualitative studies on cohabitation are therefore necessary to fully comprehend the meaning of cohabitation in Botswana today.

The other question that is postulated in this study is, why is it that, despite its dominance, academia has neglected, ignored or even marginalised the dominant relationship of cohabitation? This study therefore argues that methodological nuptialism is prominent in Botswana and African research, where both Christianity and African cultures have adopted a normative approach in their perceptions of cohabitation. There is a need to change the way relationships are studied in Botswana. A less normative approach to the study of relationships is important as it would sensitise the political landscape and facilitate an environment that encourages legal provision for individuals in cohabiting unions. A decrease in cohabiting unions might not necessarily mean an increase in marriage. Cohabitation is a stage in the development of human relationships.

Studies on cohabiting unions in Botswana have treated all cohabiting unions as homogenous, hence creating the idea that cohabiting unions largely lie outside the communal arrangement and exclude parents in their establishment. By disaggregating cohabiting unions, this study has found that not all cohabiting unions lie outside the communal arrangement. Parents, though to a lesser degree and in an 'unofficial' manner, play an active role in the establishment of some cohabiting unions. This research found that parents were often involved in the process of establishing cohabiting relationships. This then brings me to the final question: does cohabitation strengthen or question the authority of parents?

The establishment of cohabiting unions is the site where the power of the institutions (the church, *kgotla* and parents) is articulated. Cohabitation in Botswana offers the context in which the moral regulation of the physical body is exercised by the different institutions: the church, the *kgotla* and the parents/family. The different institutions use power to discipline individuals in order to maintain the general direction that relationships should take.

Cohabitation is therefore seen as a kind of disruptive behaviour that needs to be corrected through the exercise of power by the different institutions.

7.5 Conclusions

Academics must caution against methodological nuptialism in the study of adult sexual relationships. This is important since such an approach allows the voice of other relationships to be heard. Though currently not legally provided for in Botswana, the quality of a cohabiting relationship in terms of love and commitment cannot be denied. This work demonstrates that cohabiting unions are valuable relationships and cohabiting couples live committed lives, in which children are born and raised. Therefore, the quality of cohabiting unions should not be less than marriage. Avoiding methodological nuptialism will allow a truly phenomenological approach to the study of relationships.

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Abstract/Resume

Despite vast literature on cohabitation worldwide, there is little available in Botswana. Approaches that scholars have adopted in the study of marital relationships have hardly been problematised. Official statistics from national censuses and other related marital data indicate that while non-marital cohabitation rates skyrocket, marriage rates plummet. Despite this reality, cohabitation is treated as a deviant relationship, which begs the question how does a deviant relationship become such a popular choice? In many countries, like Botswana, cohabiting relationships are still not official and legally provided for. This leads to complications, especially for women and children that are involved in the event the relationship comes to an end, either through death or separation. This work interrogates how scholars have been studying relationships. The approach that has been adopted by most scholars is to take marriage as a starting point for understanding other marital statuses: single parenthood, homosexuality, cohabitation, etc. In this work, I refer to this approach as methodological nuptialism.

I reviewed international, regional and local literature on cohabitation. I then conducted a 14-month (in total) ethnographic fieldwork using focus group discussions (FGD), in-depth interviews and participant observations in two wards in Molepolole. Molepolole is a village in Botswana. As of 2011 national Housing and Population census, the total population of the district was 304,549 making it the largest village by population in Botswana. It lies in the south east of the country and is about 50 kilometres west of the national capital Gaborone. Molepolole acts as a gateway for exploring the Kalahari Desert.

FGDs were done with groups comprised of both married and unmarried people. Individuals were grouped according to level of education, age and gender. Only one group constituted both men and women. It was from the FGDs that possible cohabiting participants

were identified. Subsequently, snowballing was used until a point of data saturation was reached. In-depth interviews were then carried out with the cohabiting couples. First, I interviewed the man or woman individually, then, in the last interview, I spoke to the couple together. The in-depth interviews were held with couples dependent on their willingness and availability. Other categories of participants that were selected for in-depth interviews were: parents/relatives of the cohabiting couples, some church leaders, a chief and two *dikgosana* (headmen).

The major finding of the study is that cohabiting unions are not homogenous. There are different types of cohabiation, namely, *Go adima mosadi* (wife-borrowing); *Go inyadisa* (non-consensual cohabitation) and *Go bulela ntlu* (Visiting rights). The different types of cohabitation generally denote those types that carry the consent of parents and therefore signal social, cultural and moral level of justification as compared to those that fall outside the consent of parents.

Hence, contrary to some literature, the formation of cohabiting relationships does not always exclude parents. The formation of such relationships demonstrates a paradox regarding the authority of parents and their children as each exercises their agency against the structural expectation that everybody must marry. Reasons for cohabitation vary; however, the desire to raise children together cuts across all relationships. In general, a child is born to the couple before they decide to stay together. Couples cohabit before marriage with the full knowledge that their relationships are not legally provided for and aware of the social consequences of such unions, which are never fully recognised as marriage.

Cohabitation is a reality in Botswana, irrespective of whether parents, church and society acknowledge it or not. If the country continues to lack a political and social will to address cohabitation and provide legal protection for cohabiting couples, women and children

will continue to suffer in the event that the relationship collapses. The study of non-marital unions should be more focused on the relationship in question in order to understand it fully, instead of comparing it marriage. Marriage as a standard of what ought to be has been proven to be on the decline and no longer the only way that families are created. Therefore, there is need for a legal framework to be truly reflective of the ground reality: there are more Batswana who are cohabiting than those who are married.

Nederlandse samenvatting.

Alhoewel er een uitgebreide, wereldwijde, literatuur bestaat op het terrein van de studie van niet-huwelijkse samenlevingsrelaties, is er over de situatie hiervan in Botswana weinig bekend. Daarbij is ook duidelijk dat de benadering die veel onderzoekers gekozen hebben weinig bekritiseerd en geproblematiseerd is.

De landelijke census-data in Botswana tonen aan dat, terwijl het aantal gesloten huwelijken jaar na jaar blijft dalen, het percentage mensen dat een niet-huwelijkse samenlevingsrelatie aangaat sterk stijgt. Alhoewel deze stijging een feit is, wordt deze vorm van samenleven nog altijd beschouwd als een afwijkende, niet-geaccepteerde relatievorm, waarmee tegelijkertijd de vraag wordt opgeroepen waarom het desondanks zo een grote populariteit kent? In veel landen, zoals Botswana, is er tegelijkertijd geen formeel of wettelijk kader waarbinnen deze relaties erkend kunnen worden. Deze situatie leidt ertoe dat er vooral voor vrouwen en kinderen problemen kunnen ontstaan wanneer de relatie bijvoorbeeld door scheiding of overlijden tot een einde komt.

Deze studie bevraagt hoe wetenschappers deze relatievorm hebben onderzocht. Hierbij valt op dat veel wetenschappers veelal de huwelijkse relatie als uitgangspunt nemen in de bestudering van andere relatievormen, zoals die van eenouder-relaties, homo-relaties, of vormen van samenwonen en samenleven. In dit proefschrift refereer ik naar een dergelijk uitgangspunt van wetenschappelijk onderzoek met de Engelse term 'methodological nuptialism', ruim te vertalen als methodologisch echtschap.

Voor de studie van samenwoning in Botswana heb ik zowel internationale, regionale en lokale literatuur en andere (geschreven) bronnen geconsulteerd. Daarnaast heb ik een veertien maanden durend etnografisch veldwerk uitgevoerd, waarin ik met behulp van onderzoekstechnieken zoals groepsgesprekken, diepte-interviews en participerende

observatie met een onderzoekspopulatie heb gewerkt in twee wijken van Molepolole. Molepolole is een plaats in Botswana. De Housing and Polulation Census van 2011 geeft aan dat het bevolkingsaantal in het district van Molepolole op 304.549 inwoners ligt waardoor deze plaats als het grootste dorp van Botswana wordt beschouwd. Het is gelegen in het zuidoostelijke deel van het land, 50 km ten westen van de hoofdstad Gaborone. Molepolole is tevens gelegen aan de rand van de Kalahari woestijn waar het toegang toe biedt.

De groepsgesprekken werden uitgevoerd met zowel gehuwde als ongehuwde respondenten. Zij werden daarbij geselecteerd op basis van onderwijsniveau, leeftijd en geslacht. Uit de groepen die aan deze gesprekken deelnamen, werden vervolgens die deelnemers die een niet-huwelijkse samenlevingsrelatie bleken te hebben geselecteerd voor verder onderzoek. Vanuit deze geselecteerden werden vervolgens verdere contacten ontwikkeld met weer andere respondenten, totdat een punt van data-verzadiging was bereikt. Met samenwonende paren werden vervolgens diepte-interviews gehouden; ten eerste met de man of vrouw afzonderlijk, en daarna met het paar gezamenlijk, dit alles afhankelijk van bereidwilligheid en beschikbaarheid. Andere respondenten waarmee diepte-interviews gehouden werden, waren ouders en verwanten van de paren, kerkleiders, een lokaal volkshoofd en twee dorpsoudsten.

Een belangrijke uitkomst van het onderzoek in Botswana is dat de niet-huwelijkse samenwoningsrelatie niet slechts uit een en dezelfde relatievorm bestaat. Er zijn verschillende vormen van samenlevingsrelaties te onderscheiden, namelijk *Go adima mosadi* (wife-borrowing); *Go inyadisa* (non-consensual cohabitation) en *Go bulela ntlu* (Visiting rights) . Deze vormen van samenleving betreffen de niet-huwelijkse relaties die tegelijkertijd wel de goedkeuring van de betrokken ouders en ouderen hebben, en daardoor in sociaal, cultureel en moreel opzicht een grotere mate van erkenning verkrijgen dan de samenlevingsrelaties waarvoor die goedkeuring er niet is.

Belangrijke verschillen in een verscheidenheid aan dergelijke relatievormen bleken dus vooral samen te hangen met de vraag of de ouders van de beide partners betrokken zijn geweest in het vestigen van de relatie tussen het paar of niet. In tegenstelling tot wat vaak aangenomen wordt in de manier waarop samenwoningsrelaties tot stand komen, blijven in veel van deze gevallen de ouders niet afzijdig. Deze relatievorming brengt daarmee een paradox aan het licht met betrekking tot het gezag van ouders over hun kinderen, waarbij zowel ouders als deze paren zich niet lijken te conformeren aan de bestaande norm die zegt dat iedereen zou moeten trouwen.

De redenen die paren aangeven waarom zij samenwonen kunnen sterk van elkaar verschillen, maar in alle gevallen is er wel de wens om de kinderen uit de relatie gezamenlijk op te voeden. In veel gevallen blijkt dat voordat zij besluiten om te gaan samenwonen zij vaak al een kind hebben gekregen. Bij het besluit om te gaan samenwonen zijn paren zich vaak volledig bewust van de sociale consequenties die het samenwonen kan hebben waar dit afwijkt van een wettelijk erkend huwelijk. Dit geldt ook voor die samenwoningsrelaties waarbij de ouders wel degelijk betrokken zijn geweest in het vestigen van de relatie. Moeten hier de (belangrijkste) consequenties worden opgesomd?

Samenwoningsrelaties zijn een belangrijke realiteit geworden in Botswana, ongeacht de acceptatie of afwijzing door ouders, de kerk of de wijdere samenleving. Zolang Botswana als land niet de politieke wil toont om de wettelijke status van samenwoningsrelaties te verbeteren en te beschermen, blijven daardoor vooral vrouwen en kinderen het risico lopen slachtoffer te worden van de situatie wanneer een dergelijke relatie tot een einde komt. Deze studie betoogt daarom dat een beter begrip van samenwoningsrelaties als een specifieke relatievorm los van de status van een erkend huwelijk, daarom noodzakelijk is. Het huwelijk kan niet langer als uitgangspunt genomen worden voor de erkenning van deze relaties, omdat het aantal huwelijken sterk terugloopt, en relaties en familieverbanden tegenwoordig op tal

van andere manieren worden gevestigd. Deze studie houdt daarmee ook een pleidooi voor het scheppen van een wettelijk kader in Botswana dat recht doet aan het feit dat er tegenwoordig zich meer mensen in een samenwoningsrelatie bevinden dan in een formeel huwelijk.

Curriculum Vitae

Senzokuhle Doreen Setume obtained her first degree, BA (Humanities) from the University of Botswana in 1997 and obtaining a post graduate Diploma in Education the following year, 1998. Senzokuhle further obtained and MA (Theology and Religious Studies) and Med (Research and Evaluation) from the same University in 2004 and 2015 respectively. Senzokuhle joined the African Studies Centre, Leiden, Leiden University, in 2007 as a PhD Researcher.

Currently Senzokuhle is a lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Botswana. The following are some of the courses that Senzokuhle is teaching: Religious Rituals and Sacred places, Sociology of Religion, African Traditional Religions, Religions in Botswana and Religion and Science. Senzokuhle is the chairperson of an active research team in the department. The team won a research grant from the John Templeton foundation of $30, 000, 00. The field work has been successfully completed.

Senzokuhle has previously worked for the government at a teacher of Religious Education in secondary schools (1998-April 2004) and as a lecturer of Religious Education at Colleges of Education (May 2004 -2014).