The *ilobolo* Debacle in the Postcolonial Era: A South African Township Context

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Abstract: This article uses historical evidence to track the invention of traditions in particular spheres of South African society since the late 1600s. Presently the *ilobolo* wedding ritual practice aligns with a colonially defined social transaction based on a monetary value system. This challenges the promise to "heal the divisions" brought about the colonial injustices of the past. The data were collected employing a case study, which enabled the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Theoretical thematic analysis was used to interpret the findings. The participants' narrative revealed that prevailing socioeconomic conditions limit prospects for the development of an authentic family structure in the post-apartheid era in South Africa. In particular, it focuses on challenges such as the status of vulnerable men, a lack of access to natural capital (land) and a shift from the traditional establishment of receptive social relationships. It recommends that relevant stakeholders, such as traditional leaders, community members, and government agencies, should formulate strategies and policies to facilitate the restoration of the indigenous cultural values behind the principle of *ilobolo* and to remove the limits imposed by the consumerist tendencies that hover over the black African family structure.

Keywords: Indigenous, family, *ilobolo*, vulnerability, culture, township.

INTRODUCTION

In pre-colonial Africa, identities were embedded in the ways of life that were either destroyed or relegated to the status of uncivilised and backward beliefs, sometimes labelled as superstitious practices, or unacceptable challenges to colonial programmes and preferences (Abdi 1999:150). Scholarly analysis in recent decades has highlighted the exorbitant impact of colonialism in various parts of the world, including South Africa, especially when it comes to the alteration of indigenous cultural value systems such as the family structure. Rajuili (2004: IX) highlights how the colonial approach facilitated an abandonment or alteration of an existing cultural ethos such as *ilobolo* (bride price) among indigenous populations in favour of imposed (colonial) value systems. This scenario is perceived in some quarters as a clash between civilisations, as the enforced social changes tended to undermine the way of life of the black African populace.

When we try to understand the effects of colonialism in general, it is significant to consider the concept of invented tradition. Ranger (1993) argues that traditions have been and are invented in all situations and throughout time. This suggests that the term invention has lost some of its original meaning – that is, the part of its meaning that relates to innovation, particularly in connection with technological advancement and the like (ibid.). In simple terms, reality vanishes through the invented language that dissimulates it. Various scholars concur that invented tradition can be characterised by three distinctions: Firstly, there is distrustful manipulation of traditional structures as colonialist bureaucrats bolster a particular cultural identity to advance a hegemonic agenda among the colonised people using a divide and rule principle. Secondly, media reports are used to promote a particular socio-political front by advancing a particular cultural system. Thirdly we have the "gender roles and legitimation of colonialism" (Morwe, Mulaudzi, Tugli, Klu, Ramakuela & Matshidze 2015:2). This scenario is also emphasised by Ranger (1993). He argues as follows:

> the development of the "customary" law of persons in terms of the need to control … in a cash economy, it appeared to be the case that those who were doing economically well within the limits imposed by the colonial regime were those who had the most interest in promoting a "customary" view of control of persons, a view, that is, that could be presented and validated in customary terms. But the same people would not necessarily adhere to a completely customary package with regard to land … by those who had little stake in the … social order. But, with regard to land, these seem to be the very people who would most readily defend the customary view ...

Despite the new democratic era in the country over the past two decades, access to the natural capital of

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the country is still chiefly enjoyed by the previously advantaged social groups (Mthembu 2016:9). Thus, African people remain quarantined in the labour reserves – that is the townships – and they remain landless and are forced to sell their labour cheaply as their sole means of survival. In other words, indigenous people – especially those who live in urban areas – remain exposed to poverty and are unable to develop properly and perform their cultural rituals, such as *ilobolo* (Wohlin, Šmite & Moe 2015:229). These social developments and debates have raised concerns about the future survival of black African cultural standards and the related rite of *ilobolo*, especially among township households. This article posits that coloniality continues to haunt the African family structure and to threaten its future. It commences by providing a brief historical background of black African family structures, followed by an explanation of the context of the study. The article also highlights related theoretical guidelines, methodology, findings and discussions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: *FAMILY AND MARRIAGE*

In the 21st century, there are many sentiments about the future of the black African family structure – a structure that remains as highly contested as it was in preceding times. When we speak of African indigenous cultural value systems, it is significant to consider the impact of colonialism in this regard. Quijano (2007) (as cited by Ndlovu-Gatsheni [2013]), stresses that "the 'colonisation' of the imagination of the dominated" remains the worst form of colonisation as it deals with and shapes people's consciousness and identity. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:38) defines coloniality and colonialism as follows:

> Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that defines culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of people, in aspirations of self, and so many

other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day.

The age-old social custom of *ukulobola* cannot be traced back to its inception and its variation in terms of practicality, cultural social life and family interpretation (Rajuili 2004:35). However, Bible narratives – such as those in Genesis (24:1–67; 34:12) and 1 Samuel (18:23) – contain accounts of an equivalent bride-price rite in ancient times. The contemporary debates attest to this assumption as there are varying views when it comes to the understanding and purpose of the discourse on the black African family structure. The first view is that the present society suffers from a lack of knowledge about the rationale that guided the establishment of *ilobolo* and a family structure. The second view is that the family structure and the practice of *ilobolo* perpetuate patriarchal dictatorship (Mazibuko 2016:7373). The third view suggests that the value systems – that is, the family structure and *ilobolo* rite – uphold African cultural mores; in other words, they consolidate individual and community identities. The researcher argues that the first scenario manifests in the ways that people in general attempt to narrate or even define and conduct these rituals. The second scenario can be witnessed how the marital relationship is presented, with the woman being perceived to be in a position inferior to that of the male in this arrangement. The third view is based on the bonds that are forged between individuals or family groups when gifts such as *ilobolo* and *umbondo* (or *umembeso*) are exchanged and *umabo* (the wedding rites) is performed. The first phase of the agreement between two families entails agreement on the terms of dowries of *ilobolo* (the first stage for marriage). During the second phase, the bride brings gifts to the bridegroom's family. This is called *umbondo* and denotes the last phase before marriage. *Umabo* is the last phase of *ukulobola* rite and involves the traditional wedding.

Though this discussion about the establishment of the authentic family structure and *ukulobola* focuses on the South African context, it is important to highlight that almost all nations on the African continent express these social values differently (Mazibuko 2016:7374). For instance, the gifts exchanged between the families of the bride and bridegroom can take different forms, ranging from no valuable gifts or gifts with no material significance to livestock. A variety of names are used for these gifts, including *ilobolo*, *bohadi*, *vukosi*, *ikhazi*, *mahari* and *ruracio* (ibid.). Although this process (and

the concomitant household practices) varies from region to region, it normally has three phases: The *ukucela* is the first phase. During this phase, the process is initiated and there are consultations between the families of the individuals. The prospective bridegroom's family intends to ask for the hand in marriage of the daughter of the other household or homestead. The second phase, *umembeso*, involves an exchange of gifts. The third phase, *umabo* or *umshado,* is the traditional wedding. The *umshado* or wedding is the outcome of all the previous stages of the process. A couple that has observed these rituals are approved by both families, establish bonds with extended family members and beget children that can access both families. In the African context, the family is a group of people who are interrelated by kin associations; it is characterised by the presence of adult members who render guidance to the children and ensure their livelihood (Giddens 1993:390). The concept of marriage relates to a socially accepted and respected romantic and sexual relationship between two adults (ibid.).

Although debates are viewed as a positive element of the assessment of the issue under discussion, they can also disseminate negative vibes to worsen the situation. Lin and Palmer (2016:7) emphasise that people usually respond to "echoes" of time and space, as the epicentres of their perspectives tend to reflect time and space. In other words, the varying insights seem to suggest that there is a contest between individualism and collectivism. The contest of perceptions influences the formulation of varying polity, economic, cultural and personal relationships (Czyz, Swanepoel, Moss & Monyeki 2016). Thus, the outcomes of these varying perspectives present a dual consciousness: both coloniality and home-grown approaches in social settings.

In order to understand the current debates in South Africa, it is suggested that the country's historical background relating to controversies over changes in judicial, faith and social levels be revisited. Firstly, after the arrival of the early settlers in the 16th century, the indigenous African people enjoyed multiple flexible identities. They were self-sufficient and unwilling to sell their labour for their livelihoods (Ranger 1993). That is why the colonisers opted to introduce hut tax (a tax levied on each hut in the homestead) as a strategy to force indigenous African people to sell their labour to secure their livelihood. Subsequently, some of customs such as *ilobolo* were reinvented or altered to suit the demands of a labour market setting (Ngonyama

2009:9). Secondly, social arrangements were lost or altered by the encroaching colonialist fronts, which redefined the ancient dynastic governance system based on royalty, matriarchy -equilibrium of genders and nobility to tribal governance system, patriarchy, segmentation and proletariat (workers) to safeguard the labour supply (Beyers 2013:976). This led to the collapse of the subsistence economy that was based on a barter trade system and resulted in the deculturation and destruction of the environment (Rajuili 2004:59). Deculturation refers to a condition that obliges the colonised nation to lose their land, and threatens them with destruction if they do not denounce and forfeit their own culture and accept the imposed culture (ibid.). This situation was exacerbated in the late 19th century because missionary activity redefined the marriage process: missionaries changed *ilobolo* rites by stipulating the number of cattle to be paid by the bridegroom to the family of the bride (Hale 2010:2).

The above developments brought about three noticeable changes in the social life of the indigenous populace. Firstly, there was an increase in delays in wedding arrangements. This is emphasised by Ngubane (1978:178) as cited by Rajuili (2004:68):

> The monetarisation of *lobolo* not only erodes a woman's economic position but also destroys the support and legitimisation that come with *lobolo* payments in cattle.

Secondly, the value and practice of *ilobolo* were reduced. Rajuili (2004:68) argues as follows:

> [*Ilobolo*] delays marriage as most men are unable to afford the prohibitive bride wealth. In the urban centres of South Africa, the inflated *ilobolo* not only delays marriages, but it also has frequently led to prospective couples deciding to live together without going through the formal marriage ceremony. In due course, children are born to the couple and that further complicates the *ilobolo* negotiations.

Thirdly, there was the degeneration of *ukulobola.* This means that the bride-price practice and process became a commercial transaction that legitimised and advocated a buying and selling arrangement. This undermined the marriage institution and *ilobolo* rites, which are fundamental to the establishment of healthy

family and social relationships. When South Africa entered a new democratic era in 1994, people in the township landscape hoped that they would be able to restore the black African family structure to its former glory.

Colonialism not only imposed changes on the African landscape, for example as the result of parallel development, it also rendered indigenous cultural values and institutions as a fiction (Ngonyama 2009:3). Boyce (2010:87) argues that it is imperative to make linkages between African impoverishment, landlessness, and social divisions. In other words, the contemporary crisis in the black family structure can be linked to western colonialism, the capitalist economic system expansion, the discovery of minerals and the related proletarisation process, and the creation of a working- class to guarantee that labour demands are met. After the collapse of the homestead-based, family-oriented education system and the subsistence economy, males (particularly young men) were conscripted to supply labour in the various industries and would thus spend most of their time away from their homes and families (Ngonyama 2009:8).

In South Africa, the concerns of diversity in social and cultural situations continue to be highly debated in the post-apartheid era. In any such society, a lack of understanding of and respect for other people's cultures leads to misinterpretation and the undermining of such cultures. KwaMashu Township in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa becomes relevant in this instance. KwaMashu was founded between 1955 and 1966 as a labour reserve area and still accommodates black African people who were forcefully removed from the area once known as Mbiremusha[1] (now eThekwini). These people first lived on the periphery of Mkhumbane, Cato Manor, and were finally moved to KwaMashu Township (Mthembu 2016:5). The area is located about 32 km north of Durban, covers an area of about 18,80 km² and has a population of 175 665 (ibid.). The demography of the area shows that the majority of the population converses in isiZulu (92%), followed by isiXhosa (1,54%) and English (3%). Other languages account for less than 1% each. The unemployment rate averages 24%. About 62% of the populace in KwaMashu do not have a direct income, 32% are not economically active, 24% are unemployed and 6% are discouraged job seekers (StatsSA 2015:25). About 38% of those individuals who are

employed depend on government social grants in addition to their employment income (StatsSA 2011). This suggests that about 40% of KwaMashu households can be defined as poor and/or ultra- poor. Put colloquially, they exist in a living hell, which means among other things that they live in unhealthy conditions. Most individuals in KwaMashu can be defined in terms of one of the following four groups: (1) earnings and asset poor; (2) earnings viable and asset poor; (3) earnings poor and asset affluent; and (4) earnings and assets affluent (Angelsen & Dokken 2015:8). The unemployed in South Africa fall into all these categories. Some of the households do not include a working individual, therefore they can be regarded as both earnings poor and asset poor (Mthembu 2016:5).

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

In this study, a sociological cartography perspective, also called a spatial configurational approach, was adopted in an attempt to understand the variation between development processes that are associated with race and how this strategy regulates developmental tactics (Schensul & Heller 2010:3). This approach stresses three categories of spatiality that are both separate and interlinked: (1) the racialised area; (2) class; and (3) the transformed area (ibid.). The urban spatial approach insulates disparities of the structured milieu, race, class and residential area; the determinants of the actualities of transformative agencies include the labour market and government intervention (McGranahan, Schensul & Singh 2016:16). To gain a better understanding of these phenomena, this research accessed the racial and economic changes in residential use in the KwaMashu Township in the post-apartheid era. In so doing, the analysis focused on alteration in the urban spatial setting, using data from the KwaMashu area and drawing from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires to interpret findings.

RESEARCH METHOD

The data in this article were extracted from a PhD thesis based on a case study involving youth survival strategies in the KwaMashu Township, which is situated north of the city of Durban in the eThekwini Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The case study approach was adopted as it allowed the use of qualitative and quantitative data, as well as simultaneously analysis and triangulation to strengthen the overall quality of social science research (Creswell

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[1] In the Shona language *Mbiremusha* means "famous homestead".

2014:15). The method enabled the researcher to examine various elements of the variables, including the documents, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion features of the component under investigation (Denzin 2010:420). The life history approach enabled the researcher to attach more meaning to the concept of the process than to the concept of approach as, besides direct observation, it also offered a perspective on social change (Jorgensen 1989:22).

The purposive or convenience sampling approach was utilised to allow the researcher to identify the roles of and relationships among participants who were available and experienced in critical incidents that were relevant to the subject matter under study (Patel, 2013:172). The *entrée* strategy that was used to access the human setting was overt, as the researcher requested permission before he commenced with the interviews (Jorgensen 1989:45). The researcher used an interview schedule to guide the interviews and took notes that were transcribed immediately after each interview session.

In respect of ethical considerations, authorisation from the University of South Africa Ethics Committee was received prior to the commencement of the study. Participants were also requested to complete assent forms, which outlined what the study was about as well as matters such as confidentiality, consent, access and safety issues.

The analysis and interpretation of the data were done in a systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous manner. The software used to analyse the statistical data was the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Atlas.ti. SPSS was used to capture the data and transform it for presentation as part of the findings (Patel 2013:215). The Atlas.ti electronic software was used to perform data analysis employing a thematic analysis approach (template analysis) (Srivastava & Thomson 2009:76).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS: *EXPERIENCES AND PROSPECTS*

The findings of this study were categorised into emergent themes: participant's biographies, human capital system, family accountability and livelihoods strategies.

Participant's Biographies

Although there is no agreed-upon age category dedicated to the concept of "youth", most of the literature defines this phase in life as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, with prescribed features (Vos & Gevers 2009:27). The category of youth therefore hinges on two phases: childhood and adulthood. In other words, on one hand the category of youth is the phase that succeeds childhood, while on the other it is the phase that precedes adulthood. In South Africa, 18 years of age is regarded as the proper age at which young people are fit to take decisions that affect their lives. The age range for participants was between 18 and 29 years and the sample consisted of both males and females.

Social certainties seem to suggest that although equal opportunity can be offered, that does not guarantee its practicalities in people's daily life. This concern was emphasised by the data emanating from the study mentioned in this article. For instance, although both genders were offered the same opportunity to participate, more males (70%) than females (30%) participated. In analysing the low level of female participation in the study it can be argued that this scenario reveals the extent of the impact of patriarchy. The data confirms what the literature refers to as the experience of the females in the patriarchal system, and the need for a system that will enable females to be at the epicentre of their own social lives and also to be in equilibrium with male in social settings (Rotich, Ilieva & Walunywa 2015:137). Although this study defined gender strictly in terms of male and female, perhaps it also shows the need to start considering the inclusion of other related sexual orientation categories such as lesbian and gay, a matter which remains highly contested. Perhaps this scenario can be perceived differently by different people and we need to consider various factors, such as the prevailing social order, that encourage particular behaviour and attitudes that tend to exacerbate the disparity between male and female. For example, the present patriarchal social system advocates male dominance; it can be asked how it is possible to equalise both genders (male and female) in the face of this socio-political orientation.

Human Capital System

In order to determine the viability of the individual and society in general in terms of ensuring their livelihood, capability needs to be taken in to account. Although education is considered to be something that an individual need to acquire skills, the standard or level of education that individuals attain determines the class or the role that they occupy in society. For

instance, if one individual has obtained a degree or carpentry skills and another has attained only a school pass in a lower standard or no education at all, they will occupy different positions in their society. This scenario suggests that, in the workplace, the individual that holds a higher position or has acquired skill will earn a better wage than the second individual with less or no education. In other words, the present compensatory education system compartmentalises people into class categories, preparing them for the labour market (i.e. the supply of and demand for labour). This scenario was confirmed by one of the participants during an in-depth interview when he emphasised the following:

> *One of the challenges that some of us experience after you have enrol[led] at the FET colleges, [is that] there is a lack of relevant infrastructure to study effectively. For example, if you study under a tree, you only end up memorising everything instead of having learning equipment that will help [the] learner to know exactly what is spoken about, not only end up theorising what is supposed to be learnt and done. Another major problem is that some of the learners don't get their results and when they request results, they are told to enrol for the second level without knowledge of their previous class results. This is one of the things that lead some of the youth to withdraw from these FET classes.*

Data also show that all individuals, whether they have Matric or are illiterate, are exposed to the same conditions in the labour market. As such they are forced to sell their labour power to survive and they have no guarantee of employment. This concern was also emphasised during an in-depth interview when another participant stated the following:

> *Although my parents could afford to pay for my tuition fees to continue with schooling to finish my Standard 8, I opted not to pursue it any further and to sell fruits in the market or collect scrap metal in the community and sell it, because the current education system tends to be foreign to my traditional aspirations, as it teaches me how to be to sell my labour power as a worker, which is something that is alien and not African and also demeaning.*

This suggests that the individuals are not equipped with relevant skills, that is the abilities they will need during their course of their lives. Furthermore, although the present South African socio-political and education systems are considered to be inclusive, data also show that indigenous cultural values, such as self-reliance, and indigenous languages are still marginalised (Collinsa & Millard 2013:73).

Family Accountability

Family is the first agent of socialisation and early childhood is a major stage of personal development. Family provides the first place where a person is exposed to and moulded by matters such as language and expected behaviour, such as respect and the manner of securing a livelihood in a particular community. It is also worth mentioning that family social status and viability in terms of financial capital have a great influence on an individual's preparation for the future challenges of life. This suggests that the behaviour of individuals who either get or do not get guidance or support in this regard, will reveal this personal background during adult life. Marital status and the individual's status a member of the youth represent some of the life stages that reveal whether or not the individual has experienced the transition to adulthood in his or her particular society.

This study was conducted within the ambit of indigenous Africa owing to the researcher's interests in the state of the social affairs of black Africans in the "postcolonial" era. It is necessary to highlight that for young persons to be able to be recognised and to enter the adulthood in life, they must go through all the defined rites, such as the phases of socialisation. In addition, young people of both genders are required to pass through all premarital arrangements, including the exchange of gifts known as *ilobolo* (or dowry) between the two families involved, before they can become eligible to participate in the rite of marriage (Momoti 2002:41, 45, 49). This is also emphasised by social capital, which illustrates that individuals are obliged to follow the regulations embedded in social associations that enable its members to discover their personal and societal aims (Wohlin *et al.* 2015:229).

This study also assessed the survival strategies that young people adopt to sustain their livelihoods. The researcher was interested in discovering how unemployed individuals secure the daily lives of their families or experiences during their transition to adulthood in the present milieu. Also, young people are

usually viewed as the future, so it was vital to see whether that was still the case or just a rhetorical statement without any substance. It was necessary to know about participants' marital status in the current socioeconomic sphere to determine their coping mechanisms when they are engaged in communal arrangements.

In order to understand the accountability of participants towards their respective households and families, and in terms of their commitments, it was necessary to determine how many dependants they had. Accountability refers to their commitment to be young parents to the babies they have given birth to in terms of providing support, such as capital, to ensure the wellbeing of the child. Some communities' welcome pregnancies among young mothers and young people are in the phase when such developments can be expected. However, the manner in which pregnancies happen in township life causes them to be viewed as unethical, because the couples involved do not adhere to a clearly prescribed social process of uniting two individuals following recognised processes and structures (e.g. family consultation, the exchange of *lobolo* gifts and the marriage ceremony before a couple conceives a child).

According to the data referred to in this study, most of the participants in this study have between 0 and 5 dependants. The dominant category in this instance is participants with 0 to 2 dependants, followed by participants with 3 to 5 dependants. In other words, the majority of participants had dependants between 0 and 2 were 60% followed by the second category that had participants who did not offer a response that made up 25% and lastly, the third category of participants who had children between 3 and 5 and made up 15%. Therefore, it's worth highlighting that the second category indicates that no answer to the question has been provided. This suggests that the first and third categories are not a true reflection of the number of children in each category. In other words, there a need to investigate various factors that influence their rationale for not divulging this information. Perhaps those factors include the attitude of the individual towards a lack of help. Many of these factors are only known to each individual. There are various views on the factors that lead to pregnancies among young people. One such view is that young people fall pregnant to get a social grant from the government. Another suggests that young people are in a stage that requires self-exploration, especially as colonialist forces have stripped the African family of its

socialisation processes and access to the land where socialisation and learning often occurred (Mphatswe, Maise & Sebitloane 2016:154).

When trying to understand the rationale for youth pregnancy, various other issues should be considered. It is suggested that family background (e.g. whether the individual has a formal family structure that consists of a father and a mother) and self-sufficiency status can offer some clues about the type of household. The socialisation of the individual again plays a meaningful role in their development of individual moral standards. Cultural perspective also becomes relevant here as it emphasises that socialisation processes serve the basic function of empowering young persons with skills that will help them to meet challenges effectively during their adult lives (Mthembu 2009:8).

In terms of what has been said above, it can be argued that the state of affairs among young people shows the weakening state of the African value system and that this exposes the youth to early child bearing, which was and still is viewed in a negative light, especially when the individuals are not married. This situation may be exacerbated by the failure of parents and the youth to live up to what is expected of them. Although the youth is often seen to be delinquent, it also important to consider the fact that the social settings in townships do not enable parents to inculcate the relevant community values and cultural aspects of their particular society in their children. The researcher argues that this condition needs to be linked to the manner in which most black African adults in the township fail to spend most of their time in their households with their children. Most of the parents or adults in the township are of course expected to spend most of their time in the workplace as workers in order to secure their basic life needs. He also argues that this scenario needs to be associated with the proletarisation process – it means that indigenous South Africans are forced to sell their labour on the labour market for a reward or income. In other words, the data confirm that the intrusion of colonialism has impacted severely on indigenous cultural value systems such as the parental inculcation of values and access to natural capital in relation to the empowerment of youth to meet challenges in their daily lives (Ngaloshe, 2000:55).

This scenario was emphasised when the researcher was attempting to gain a better understanding of the challenges that the youth encounter in relation to their relationships with their parents and in respect of

traditional customs. During an in-depth interview, one participant stated the following:

> *The worst part is that even our parents they don't have the way to guide us or curb us in case we go wrong in life because now we live a "free life". So, in other words the young people are trained whilst they are young and this tend[s] to go against the traditional culture of Africa, as it is usually stated that young people are tamed whilst they are tender and even wood is bent whilst it is still wet to avoid breaking. So that means there is a gap between parents and their children.*

Although a cultural viewpoint confirms the significance of sound relations between elders and young people, especially when it comes to giving guidance, the intrusion of neo-liberalism continues to limit such aspirations (Morwe *et al.* 2015:1). This assertion is emphasised by Ngaloshe (2000:55) when she highlights that young people are swallowed by the impact of the current social changes sweeping across the world. These changes allow young people to disrespect their elders and in so doing threatens the very basis of their lives. In other words, data confirms that the impact of colonialism has features that encourage the demeaning of indigenous cultural value systems (Gay 2004:129). However, although the youth find a di-synchronous relation between modern Westernised culture in their society and their traditional cultural practices, this tends to alienate them even further from their indigenous society (Turner 2006:9). For example, they become more ignorant of their cultural rites and customs.

Ignorance of their cultural background, in turn, causes them to admire things that used to be regarded as taboo to young persons. Engaging in sexual activity, for example, has become akin to a fashion or a manner of socialisation, especially in township life. When the researcher asked what challenges, participants encounter daily to secure their needs, one participant argued (during the in-depth interview) as follows: *Except, if you talk about impregnating each other and drug abuse …* This narrative tends to confirm what the literature states: that township youth, consisting of school dropouts, heavy drinkers of alcohol, individuals who are always partying and bored and have multiple sexual partners, end up giving birth to babies whom they cannot support and for whose relevant social needs they cannot meet (Swartz 2009:70). The data

also confirm what the literature highlights, namely that pregnancy or impregnation tends to be a matter of "fashion" among the young. This is illustrated by the fact that most of the participants had one or two dependants. This situation suggests that as long as the present township landscape prevails, indigenes will continue to use whatever they have at their disposal to adapt to the situations in which they find themselves and that they will include approaches that have previously not been followed.

While acknowledging young people's limitations, and without justifying or endorsing their unprincipled conduct, it is also important to scrutinise the environment in which they live. The data tend to confirm the argument in the literature that some young people engage in multiple sexual partnerships, are always partying, wear branded clothing, drink alcohol and use drugs, all because they are bored and have no other activities on which to spend time (Swartz 2009:70). In summary, the data confirm the literature that calls the township setting a dormitory for people who have been designated as the "working class", as they spend most of their time as a cog in the wheel of work: they go to their respective workplaces in the morning and return in the evening to sleep for the night.

The dawn of democracy was perceived to be a relief for individuals living in townships. Urban renewal development programmes, however, have tended to be limited in their redressing of past injustices (e.g. forceful removal to labour reserves) by sustaining township spatiality. It is argued here that the present township development programmes confirm what the literature calls the disregard of historic capitalist development, which was characterised by land dispossession, the proletarianisation process and labour reserves quarantining indigenes (Soja 1980:211; Beyers 2013:976; Hall & Ntsebeza 2007:8). In summary, it is argued that this scenario is tantamount to the underdevelopment of indigenous people, leading to a failure to self-sustain in terms of meeting their personal needs, and to what the researcher defines as "precarious violence".

Livelihood Strategies

In the present social setting and current socioeconomic situation, which determine an individual's financial viability, a person's status determines their access to various social basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing, or their ability to secure their livelihood. Although there is no uniformity in the categorisation of socioeconomic status, it

nevertheless depends on cultural certainty and applications (Czyz *et al.* 2016:31).

When the researcher attempted to gain a better understanding of the socioeconomic conditions of the participants, a question was posed about the challenges they encounter in meeting their daily livelihood needs. During interviews, some of the participants responded as follows: "*Lack of employment opportunities makes it hard for me to meet my basic daily needs such as food.*" This was also emphasised by another participant who talked about "*… not getting employment after you have finished Matric.*" This experience was confirmed by yet another participant. When the researcher tried to gain a better understanding of participants' inability to access resources to guarantee their income and secure their daily living, one of the participants stated the following during the in-depth interview: "*Starvation and poverty are serious problems at present.*" It can be argued that these narratives confirm what has been said about the impact of colonialism on the socioeconomic status of the colonised people, namely that it has impacted issues that pertain to health and access to basic needs for survival (Czyz *et al*. 2016:31).

The researcher also attempted to ascertain the employment status of participants in this study. The data confirm claims made in the literature, namely that some unemployed individuals opt to engage in the informal economy to get at least enough money to buy bread. During an in-depth interview, one participant said the following: "*I saw that establishing a stall will help me to reach my desired goals in terms of getting some income.*" The data emphasise what has been highlighted in the literature, namely that youth unemployment in South Africa is high, some young people are inactive and others engage in informal trade as an alternative strategy to meet their livelihood needs (StatsSA 2015:25).

The data also confirm that the purpose of critical social theory is to reveal the rationality of current or past injustices at the micro and macro levels where "action, social relationships to associations" are adopted with a view of suggesting a feasible alternative means for a "legitimated order" (Turner 2006:4). However, the data also reveal that individuals are not always able to respond to a challenging situation, as some of the participants did not indicate their activities and were discouraged. In view of the fact that some of the young people have limited social benefits and are unemployed, or do not have a complete family with a mother and a father, they use social capital in an attempt to close such gaps. For instance, they acquire social capital through neighbours who provide help in the form of food, do babysitting at no cost and meet related needs (Allatt 1993:143). This social capital approach emphasises the African-based cultural perspective that a connection among people enables them to share information that affect their daily lives in a particular locale (Owusu-Ansah & Mji 2013:1). For instance, the individuals' educational background determines their opportunities for employment. Also, it can be argued that this situation seems to encourage unequal access to certain resources in the community, while in the precolonial state all persons were guaranteed equal access to work and related capitals.

It is worth highlighting that young people are heterogeneous, as they come from different backgrounds. This suggests that their assessment of a situation will vary and their responses will differ. The researcher was interested in understanding the activities that participants undertake to sustain their lives. Some of the participants responded as follows: "*I don't want to be controlled by other people that is the reason, so that I can do what I like best.*" Another participant said: "*I realised that I have a potential as a young person, so I opted to do something for myself.*" In other words, the data reveal that some of the participants were cautious about the situation they were confronted with and the reasons for taking action. This scenario can suggest that the youth and their actions indirectly counteract the labels that are given to them as "youth in crisis". This was revealed when one participant highlighted in their response during an interview that "*the way we live under present conditions as young people, we have lost our moral value*". This was also stressed by other participants, who noted the following: "*I believe that I'm the captain of my life, which is why I have to do something for myself, so that I can live.*" These narratives tend to confirm what has already been highlighted, namely that some of the young people resist such labels as "the lost generation" and "generation in crisis" because the challenges they are facing are structurally based (Boyce 2010:87; Mattes 2011:4). The data tend to endorse that individuals, irrespective of their gender, use alternative means to establish their families owing to their lack of relevant resources (i.e. employment and financial support). They have children and adopt a single-parent approach, which is an available and feasible alternative to the traditional family structure.

When the researcher tried to understand their rationale for resorting to various initiatives to secure their livelihoods, participants stressed their different

approaches during the interviews. These include *"selecting friends with high morals and they can give good advice"*. One participant emphasised the following: *"The passing away of my parents taught me to have a focused life."* Another participant stated: "*In order to secure the future of my children, that is why I have to do something, so that they can have food.*"

These diverse narratives from participants confirm the significance of social capital that enables them individually and collectively to recognise their responsibility and relevance in their communities (Allatt 1993:143). The data also confirms that social capital involves emotional capital, because some of the participants took action based on their emotions (ibid.).

A large proportion of the respondents did not reveal their reasons for not doing anything, which raised some concerns. Perhaps it could be argued that this is another way of showing their disgruntlement or hiding the challenges they face. Their lack of opportunities to create acceptable living conditions and their lack of role-models who have attained a good standard of living present vulnerable young people with a choice: either they create their source of income or they affiliate with a social structure. In dissecting this assertion, it can be argued that the various activities undertaken by poor individuals seem to offer them some reward, which they use to secure their necessities (Hosang 2006). Nonetheless, the data tend to confirm what is highlighted in the literature, namely those vulnerable young people, especially those who are unemployed, often embark on delinquent behaviour (Ngaloshe 2000:14).

CONCLUSION

This purpose of this article was to highlight the challenges that black Africans face in sustaining a family structure and participating in related rites such as *ilobolo* in the "postcolonial" era. There is only limited literature that exposes coloniality and deculturation in urban settings such as townships. This article contributes to the small body of literature that deals with these issues and exposes young people's experiences when they attempt to make a living and sustain their family structures in the post-apartheid era. The findings confirm three aspects of Schensul and Heller's (2010:3) sociological cartography perspective, namely (1) racialised area, (2) class and (3) transformed area, in relation to social change in South Africa. The participants' narratives revealed connections between gender, race, class and emancipation, particularly in a socioeconomic context

that prevents them from participating in custom-related rituals such as *ilobolo*. The article reveals the significant role of the *ilobolo* rite in the consolidation of individual identity and healthy family structures. It also refutes the notion that *ilobolo* encourages men to be violent and lead to the commodification of women, which ignores the fact that women also play a meaningful role in the completion of the process. For instance, women or men who have not participated in this ritual are not recognised or supported in times of need. Some individuals adopt alternative means of constituting a family, for example through cohabiting, single parenthood and offering limited social support to family members. Vulnerable individuals, irrespective of their gender, suffer the same consequences of unemployment and limitations to establish an authentic family structure. A further study is recommended to investigate the rise of gender violence in such circumstances.

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