# The Wedding Performance: Gender Inequality and System Justification in the White Wedding

by

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# Declaration

I, Ursula Monica Froschauer, declare that this thesis is my own original work. Secondary material has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements. This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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# Abstract

The white wedding has become a traditional ritual, which transmits with its preparations and celebrations stereotypical and patriarchal gender norms. Ten white, middle-class, heterosexual, newlywed couples formed the participants for the research study. The predominantly South African participants were interviewed about their weddings and the interviews transcribed verbatim. The resultant texts were analysed using Parker's (2005) framework for discourse analytic reading. Throughout the analysis specific wedding discourses emerged, which served the purposes and intentions of the couples. Discourses, such as the fairy-tale discourse and the bride's day discourse, allowed couples to justify certain gender inequalities and to experience the comforting effects of palliation. System Justification Theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) functioned as a theoretical tool to understand and make sense of these justifications and accounts. The findings suggest that wedding discourses encourage the objectification of women and their treatment in a benevolently sexist manner, the unequal distribution of wedding labour between the bride and groom and ultimately the perpetuation of women's subordination in heterosexual relationships. Participating in the rituals of the white wedding enhances women's depressed sense of entitlement and out-group contact with men, which has a negative effect on gender equality and women's emancipation.

**Key Words:** *White Wedding, System Justification Theory, Gender, Benevolent Sexism, Discourse Analysis*

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# 1 Introduction

Eurocentric, heterosexual, white weddings[1] are significant rituals in which women and men actively and passively construct and perform their gendered identities[2]. On her wedding day a woman enacts femininity, purity and vulnerability through, for example, the wearing of a white dress and by being escorted from one man, her father, to another, her soon-to-be husband (Yalom, 2001). Similarly, a man enacts masculinity, dominance and strength through vowing to protect his future wife and claiming her as his property by labelling her with his surname (Goldin & Shim, 2004). These current wedding practices are founded on historical wedding rituals that are particularly gender biased. The gendered description of the bride and groom's roles illustrates the patriarchal nature of weddings (Heise, 2012). Girls are encouraged from childhood to aspire to have their special wedding and to be married, while on their wedding day women become objects to be given away. Interestingly, women will also engage in most of the wedding planning for the couple's wedding (Pleck, 2000; Sniezek, 2005). This suggests that despite fervently participating in her white wedding, the encouragement of the white wedding may ultimately be disadvantageous to the bride and to women as a group (Geller, 2001).

Considering the patriarchal nature of white weddings, why, then, do women eagerly participate in a ritual whereby gender norms and the performance of gender roles are not favourable to them as a group? System Justification Theory (SJT) (Jost & Banaji, 1994) provides a possible explanation for this, stating that "people seek to maintain or enhance the legitimacy and stability of existing forms of social arrangements" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 113). Interestingly, according to SJT individuals who are the most

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[1] The term 'white wedding' is commonly used to refer to the Eurocentric, heterosexual, traditional wedding that is mostly celebrated amongst white people (Ingraham, 1999). It encompasses practices such as "wearing an engagement ring, attending showers, giving and receiving gifts, sending invitations, putting on a wedding dress, buying flowers, attending receptions and honeymoons, and even commemorating the day with memory books, photographs or anniversary parties" (Shrout, 2010).
[2] This research study applies the terms 'white wedding' and 'wedding' interchangeably, whereby either of these terms implies the Eurocentric, white, heterosexual wedding ceremony.

disadvantaged by their group membership, such as women, are perhaps more likely to justify the repressive system (Jost, Banaji & Nosek, 2004). In this research study the white wedding is considered to be this repressive system.

Previous psychological research in the field of white weddings is scarce (Kalmijn, 2004). This suggests the sacred nature of white weddings and consequently deems them taboo to critique. Only a handful of psychological studies have considered the patriarchal nature of weddings and the disadvantage this creates for women. Instead, much of the research related to weddings has focused on either non-Western weddings or aspects of weddings that are not directly relevant to this research, such as rituals, gifts, consumerism, films, families and marriage (Carter, 2010; Kalmijn, 2004). In addition to this SJT has been applied to a variety of social psychological phenomena; however, no research has been found in which SJT has been applied to analyse white weddings. The relevant research on white weddings and the research on SJT is considered in the literature review. This study locates itself within the gap of research and literature related to the interconnection of system justification and white weddings. Consequently, this research aims to study how system justification is present in heterosexual white weddings, how system justification contributes towards the performance and reproduction of gender (Butler, 1993) and how and why couples justify the inequality of the wedding ceremony through commonly used discourses.

In uncovering the nature of system justification in white weddings a discourse analysis is applied to ten interviews with Eurocentric, white, middle-class, heterosexual, newlywed couples. Through this type of analysis the discourses that couples use to construct their experience of their wedding planning, and their wedding itself, come to the fore. These discourses combined with gender specific wedding practices enable a system-justifying function. Subsequently, this encourages patriarchy and gender inequality, and prevents social change (Becker & Wright, 2011).

This research is located within a social constructionist paradigm. It considers how reality is socially constructed and deconstructed, and questions accepted and taken-for-granted practices (Kiguwa, 2004). From a social constructionist perspective this research seeks to understand how brides and grooms construct their white wedding through the discourses that they are exposed to and use. The analysis uncovers how couples create meaningful experiences and how they justify certain wedding rituals and practices, such as, for example, the gendered distribution of wedding work, through the use of these discourses. The analysis is concluded with an exploration of why couples, and especially women, support and promote the gender unequal white wedding.

Following the analysis, the discussion chapter of this research suggests how SJT provides an understanding of why these wedding practices continue to be resistant to change and how the gender unequal nature of weddings is enabled. Thereafter, the limitations and recommendations of this study are mentioned. Considering the gap in literature and the novelty of the research, further qualitative and quantitative research studies in this field are required. The qualitative research design applied in this study necessitates a focus on the researcher's personal experience. The study is, thus, introduced and concluded with the reflexive preface and reflexive epilogue, whereby the researcher's own interest and positioning in this study is considered.

## 2 Reflexive Preface

I was extremely disappointed at the age of about 5 when I asked my mother if I could see her wedding photographs. Unlike the images I had seen on T.V. or in fairy-tales, the photographs in front of me revealed a younger version of my parents standing on the stairs before a court building. The bride, my mother, was wearing a knee-length grey skirt with a matching jacket. I was confused and clearly disillusioned. Why was there no big white dress? Where were the flower girls? Where were the flowers? Why was the building in the background not a beautiful church? Why didn't they have a horse and carriage, like Cinderella? Most of all I was disappointed that I could not try on and play dress-up in my mother's white wedding dress. I, like most girls in my generation, had learnt to look forward to the day I would be a princess and marry my knight in shining armour. I still remember having a Barbie with a glittery ballroom gown that I would pretend was a wedding dress. The dress was all Barbie needed to be Ken's bride. Where had I learnt this? Considering the court-wedding my parents had, possibly not from my parents, but perhaps at nursery school or from my fairy-tale books. Where I had learnt about the white wedding did not matter to me at age 5, I just wanted to make sure that I did not make the same 'mistake' my mother had. I resolved that one day I would wear a white wedding dress and be a princess.

Along the way something changed. In the course of my honours degree my social psychology lecturer, Prof. Kevin Durrheim, introduced us to the work of Prof. Judith Butler, a gender theorist who has written on the notion of gender as a social construction and gender as a performance (Butler, 1990; Butler, 2004). No longer could I look at the world through rose-coloured glasses. Wherever I looked I saw and questioned performances that served to construct supposedly unnoticed gender inequality. This has to a large extent informed my research interests. In previous research I have been intrigued by the possibility that women encourage gender discrimination and thus enable their own subordination (Froschauer, 2014).

During a time when many of my girlfriends were getting married, I was amazed and disturbed that my friends, who had unique personalities subscribed so easily to wedding traditions that were clearly sexist and limited their unique personalities. Friends whom I had never seen in a dress or wearing make-up were transformed into different people on their wedding day. Friends who were living with their partners were walked down the aisle by their father to be given to the groom. A very meek and shy friend was all of a sudden placed at centre stage at her wedding of 150+ people. Outgoing and extraverted friends would quietly sit as speeches were made about them, not saying a word.

I recall a particular friend's wedding which I attended: as I walked out of the chapel we, the guests, were prevented from greeting or congratulating the bride and groom, because the photographer insisted that photographs had to be taken in the misty-drizzly weather before visibility became completely impaired. We then posed for a group photograph, while being directed forwards, backwards and to the side. Once we were all cued to smile the photographer took his shot and exclaimed "enjoy the show!" And yes, it was a show! A great wedding performance! Again, I was disillusioned. I saw that the white wedding did not fit well with many of my friends, yet they squeezed themselves into the performance of the white wedding mould. It continuously shocked me.

During this time my partner and I also started discussing our own plans of marrying each other and I realised what was expected of me. I did not wish to do some of what was expected for me. We were both independent, yet the expectation was that, because I am a woman, I would be walked down the aisle by my father to be given away. Like my partner, I had been given a name on the day of my birth that had served to identify me as a person, yet it would still be expected of me to change my surname to a surname that did not reflect me or my cultural heritage. My favourite colour was green, but I was expected to wear white or a shade of white, such as off-white, beige, ivory, eggshell,

cream, linen, snow, champagne or vanilla on our wedding day. Considering these expectations of me, I was saddened to think that so many women gave up their own identity and gender rights by submitting to what I saw as limiting and sexist traditions in wedding ceremonies.

This is what has formed the backdrop for wanting to research this sacred ritual. Simply put I was interested in other people's stories about their wedding and how they tell these stories. I wanted to understand why my educated girlfriends and women in general conformed to the sexist traditions of the white wedding. It was clear to me that the white wedding was laced with patriarchal traditions, yet brides appeared to be far too eager to have a white wedding. I was interested in finding out what the magic of the white wedding was and why it had become an important developmental goal for women. To immerse myself in this 'investigation' I roped a friend into attending a wedding expo with me during the early stages of this research. Amongst the vast images of cupids, butterflies, hearts, flowers and chandeliers I witnessed that with all the brides-to-be at this expo wedding work was women's work. Although this experience at the wedding expo with the many service providers was overwhelming for me, I realised that there was a promise of wedding magic in store for these brides. In this research I assume that couples talk about their white wedding in a manner that gives the wedding its value and alludes to the magic of the wedding. It is from a position of a mixture of disbelief and curiosity that I have chosen to research this 'wedding performance'.

# 3 Literature Review

## 3.1 White Weddings

"But, ironically, in many respects and in many societies, marriage is more advantageous for the man than for the woman. In middle-class European society, a "good" marriage for a woman would support her for life, but she sacrifices freedom as she subjugates herself to her husband. In weddings, as with many traditional turning points in life or seasons, we can observe a form of topsy-turvydom— the bride is the central character, with the groom apparently playing a secondary and reluctant role" (Monger, 2004, p. xi-xii).

### 3.1.1 Introduction

Research and literature on white weddings in the field of psychology is evidently lacking (Humble, 2003; Ingraham, 1999; Kalmijn, 2004). A possible reason for this may be the widespread social acceptance and approval of the white wedding, rendering it a less stimulating and provocative research area. This perhaps explains why a greater number of academics have chosen to study non-Western weddings (Shrout, 2010). Throughout history weddings have been life-altering and normative rituals that manifest dominant ideology and that hold significant personal and social meaning for the individuals who initiate and participate in them (Baxter et al. 2009; Oswald, 2000; Tombaugh, 2009). The significance of this ritual may in turn deem it taboo for critique. This chapter focuses on a review of literature on white weddings. It begins with a brief review of literature of the history of wedding ceremonies and then describes weddings as they are today. A critique of gendered and patriarchal practices in wedding ceremonies is introduced, suggesting that women do much of the wedding planning work for a ceremony that is restrictive towards women and whose consequences appear to be outside of their interests as a group (Monger, 2004; Tombaugh, 2009).

## 3.1.2  Weddings: Past and Present

Historically[3] wedding ceremonies were legal transfers, whereby the bride would be given to the groom in exchange for a bride-price (Lewis, 1997; Yalom, 2001). The purchase of the bride was done by the groom who presented a ring "as partial payment for the bride" (Lee, 1994, p. 35). Following this it was common practice for the bride to display her groom's potential wealth by wearing the ring for others to see (Ingraham, 1999; Ogletree, 2010). Historically the bride would have little say with regards to whom she would marry and would be handed over to her groom by her father (Greer, 1970). During the wedding ceremony the bride stood against her groom's left side; this was done in keeping with medieval traditions that a groom had to keep his right arm free to draw his sword should he need to protect his property, the bride (Benshea & Benshea, 2005). The wedding itself would bring family and community members together and the size of the wedding grew as time passed (Shrout, 2010). The extravagance of the wedding also depended on the family's wealth, which was reflected in the bride price paid by the bride's fiancé to her father (Winge & Eicher, 2003; Yalom, 2001). On the wedding day, the bride would wear a white dress and veil that were representative of her virginity, innocence and purity (He, 2009). Despite evidence that ancient Roman brides married in white tunics, the traditional white wedding dress only became popular in Eurocentric culture after Queen Victoria married Prince Albert in a white dress in 1840 (He, 2009; Hersch, 2010; Ingraham, 1999; Yalom, 2001). During her wedding the bride would hold a bouquet of flowers that was representative of her fertility (Strano, 2006). The bride would also adopt her husband's surname once she was married to indicate her marital status and to show whose authority she now fell under (Emens, 2007). Interestingly, the practice of taking on another's surname was common in slave-

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[3] Throughout the centuries wedding traditions and practices have adapted and changed according to the Zeitgeist and culture in which they were practiced (Yalom, 2001). This research places a greater emphasis on current weddings with a general and brief review of the wedding traditions of the last two centuries that have influenced weddings today.

master relationships when it was law for a slave to take on their master's surname to indicate ownership. Overall, it appears that "the formal wedding ceremony [was] rooted in a patriarchal cultural system" (Lewis, 1997, p. 186). In recent history wedding ceremonies have been noticeably gender biased and gender unequal rituals, whereby women had little or no say in the process of the ritual (Fairchild, 2014; Monger, 2004; Yalom, 2001).

Nowadays the Eurocentric, white, heterosexual wedding varies somewhat from couple to couple; however, the basic formula of how to do a wedding remains the same (Bambacas, 2002). Generally, the wedding day is characterised by a wedding ceremony during which the bride wears a white dress and is walked down the aisle by her father to be given to the groom, she is unveiled before the groom, the couple exchange vows and rings and they are then pronounced as husband and wife by a wedding official, who is often a religious leader (Fox, 2010). After this, while the wedding guests mingle, the couple would have photographs taken of themselves and the bridal party to commemorate the significance of the wedding day. Once the couple returns to join the guests the reception begins, often with dinner, dancing and speeches (Geller, 2001). This basic structure, which is strongly rooted in historical practices, makes a wedding a wedding and allows for a significant and predictable ritual to take place (Yalom, 2001).

The white wedding embraces rituals that transcend time and cultures. This is noticeable in the way in which the white wedding has crept into non-Western cultures. It is not uncommon for people of certain cultures, such as the amaZulu, the Japanese or the Chinese, for example, to have a traditional cultural wedding, which is laden with traditional cultural meaning and practices, as well as a white wedding (Cheng et al., 2008; Goldstein-Gidoni, 2000; Lee, Lee & Chung, 2011; Ma, 2006; Thulo, 2013). For instance, when considering traditional cultural weddings in the South African context, like a Zulu wedding, this interesting dual practice becomes prominent. A traditional Zulu wedding involves the paying of a bride-price, known as *lobola* (Klopper, 1991). In rural

areas this is often paid in cattle and is given to the bride's family in return that she marries the groom (Barker, 2003). In urban areas *lobola* is more likely to be paid in cash instead of cattle. *Lobola*, which is higher if the bride is a virgin, intends to foster a working relationship between the two families and indicates the groom's ability to care for his future wife (Hutchinson, 1974). The value of *lobola* is based on the bride's worth and considers sexual status, education and children as influential factors in determining the price. Before the Zulu wedding the bride chooses whom she desires to marry, if her chosen husband-to-be consents, the wedding ceremony and the celebrations continue (Monger, 2004). The wedding ceremony is characterised by rituals that involve the brewing of beer and slaughtering of animals for feasting, dancing, singing and the adornment of the bride with body paint of red and white ocher (Monger, 2004). As the researcher has witnessed with friends and colleagues, despite these rich cultural wedding traditions many urban Zulu brides will choose to supplement these cultural wedding traditions with white wedding practices (Fux, 2015). The supplementary white wedding may take place on another day, whereby the bride and groom would wear traditional Western wedding attire, such as a white wedding dress and suit, and perform many of the abovementioned Western wedding practices (Thulo, 2013). These Western wedding practices are possibly incorporated into the wedding celebrations because they are suggestive of "symbols of success and prestige" (Ma, 2006, p. 64).

In many cultures wedding ceremonies are rituals that are tied together with much excitement, celebration and planning (Humble, 2003; Otnes & Pleck, 2003). Rituals are structured performances, which determine, reinforce and reproduce what is sacred to those individuals who perform the ritual (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2006; Goffman, 1959). Montemurro (2002) states that "through participating in ritual, people give in to the norms of the situation or do things that must be done in order to meet the needs of the society or social group" (p. 70). This emphasises the expectation and need to conform to the scripted practices of the wedding rituals. The wedding, as a ritual, is a defining moment, whereby a couple occupies "centre stage in a way that they will at no other

time in their lives" (Geller, 2001, p. 255). Weddings are an important and necessary rite of passage in that they signify the birth of marriage and represent a couple taking the 'next step' in their relationship with two individuals making a commitment to each other before family and friends (Ingraham, 1999; Montemurro, 2005). Weddings signify a role transition from being single to being married (Kalmijn, 2004; Lee et al., 2011). This transition is formative and presents a poignant milestone in the lives of the individuals who form the couple and probably also in the lives of their family and friends (Nelson & Otnes, 2005). Kalmijn (2004) has found that "wedding ceremonies are a way to obtain approval for the entry into normatively prescribed roles" (p. 592). As such, the wedding becomes a defining public moment whereby individuals take on the specific roles associated with being a wife and a husband. Even psychotherapists view this transition from singlehood to coupledom as a developmental milestone. It is assumed that individuals have reached a more mature stage of their lives whereby they can be responsive to not only their own needs, but also to the needs of their partner (Hendrix, 2008; Morgan, 2016). Furthermore, weddings often bring friends and family from near and far together to celebrate, and therefore weddings have a unifying effect (Geller, 2001). Within this ritual support is shown for the couple's matrimony by assisting with the organisation of the celebration, attending the bridal shower, giving wedding gifts and attending the wedding (Montemurro, 2002).

In spite of the favourable views held of weddings many of the abovementioned traditional and gender biased practices are still incorporated in weddings today (Ingraham, 1999). For example, men display their dominance by proposing marriage. Similar to the scripted wedding practices that construct the wedding performance, the proposal also suggests a scripted performance which is generally comprised of the man asking the woman's father if he may marry the woman, the man proposing marriage to the woman and the man giving an engagement ring to the bride-to-be (Schweingruber, Anahita & Berns, 2004). Examples of other gender biased and scripted practices that constitute the wedding performance are that women are walked down the aisle to be

passed on from father to groom, women wear white dresses and veils, men give speeches at the reception and women change their surnames once married. Weddings are thus strong reinforcers of gender stereotypical behaviour as the norm (Bambacas, 2002; Oswald, 2000).

The transition from singlehood to heterosexual coupledom appears to hold greater significance for women than for men (Leonard, 2006). Research by Blakemore, Lawton and Vartanian (2005) revealed that women have a higher drive to marry, than their male counterparts. Influential factors for women marrying were concerns regarding others' views of them, as well as traditional gender role attitudes. Studies have shown that compared to married people, singles are viewed more negatively (see Hertel, Schütz, DePaulo, Morris & Stucke, 2007). Consequently, the encouragement of coupledom is supported. This is seen in wedding traditions, such as the throwing of the bride's bouquet and garter (Benshea & Benshea, 2005). The assumption is that the single individuals who catch the bouquet and garter, which are thrown over the bride and groom's shoulders respectively, will be the next people in line to marry (Fox, 2010). This ritual supports, encourages and transfers the norm of heterosexuality, coupledom and weddings (Montemurro, 2002; Oswald, 2000). On a broader, societal level marriage also signifies an elevation in status for the bride (Hillis, 2009; Montemurro, 2002). It has been noted that the status elevation holds more weight for a woman, than a man (Blakemore et al., 2005; Hersch, 2010). This is evident with the emphasis that is placed on the wedding being the bride's most important day of her life (Heise, 2012; Otnes & Pleck, 2003). The bride is described as "both the planner and star of the wedding" (Bambacas, 2002, p. 193). Talk about the bridal table, bridal party, bridal couple, bridal expo, etc. only serve to make this more apparent. Interestingly, although the bride is the central character of the wedding, wedding planning is assumed to be the bride's work and much of the wedding planning advice is directed towards women, which is clearly noticed in a variety of bridal magazines and wedding planning websites (Carter, 2010; Tombaugh, 2009).

The elevation in a woman's status once married also becomes identifiable in the language that is used to speak about women and men's singlehood. For example, the words 'bachelor' and 'spinster' that describe an individual's unmarried status have varying meanings (Goddard & Meân, 2009). 'Spinster' is viewed more negatively and stigmatised more readily, while 'bachelor' is viewed more favourably (consider the positive description of a single man as an 'eligible bachelor') (Bolick, 2015). Therefore, by transforming her relational identity from spinster to bride to wife a woman climbs the social status ladder (Carter, 2010; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Furthermore, by giving titles based on their marital status, like Mrs. or Miss, women, unlike men, are identified and defined based on their relationship to a man (McDonough & Harrison, 1978). Interestingly, those women in Blakemore and her colleagues' (2005) research who indicated a higher drive to marry also expressed a greater desire to adopt their husband's surname once married. The change in surname indicates a change in identity from being single to being married, as well as to whom a woman is affiliated (Goldin & Shim, 2004; Speer, 2005). Therefore, it comes to the fore that by participating in the wedding ritual a woman reaches the ultimate prescribed goal of heterosexual hegemony, since "weddings are constructed as one of the defining moments of a girl's life in her progression toward womanhood" (Bambacas, 2002, p. 193). The same practices of changing one's title and surname are not applicable to a man, which explains why Ingraham (1999) describes this practice as a "patriarchal tradition" (p. 104).

There is evidently a societal expectation and norm that women would change their surname once married as indicated in the following extract from a wedding advice booklet: "If you are anything like the *i'm a mrs* [emphasis added] team, back in your school days you doodled away many a maths class practicing what your signature would look like if you married your favourite crush. Little did you know that once you really did have to change your name, it would make choosing your wedding seem as easy as pie"

(The Marriage Meander Company, n.d., p. 16). Consequently, although the bride is the central and admired character of the wedding, by participating in the wedding ritual she partakes in historical practices that are rooted in patriarchy and subsequently she reinforces an oppressive patriarchal ideology, which is ultimately not in her favour (Kipnis, 2006; Tombaugh, 2009).

### 3.1.3 Pioneering Research on White Weddings

Literature on critical analyses in the field of psychology on white weddings is lacking. Much of the research found on weddings has focused on non-Western weddings (Kalmijn, 2004; Shrout, 2010). In some research studies that have focused on Western, Eurocentric weddings the emphasis tended to be on rituals, gifts, consumerism, films, families and marriage, and as such that research is not particularly relevant to this study (Carter, 2010). The existing research on weddings has also come from a predominantly sociological and anthropological angle, instead of a psychological one (Kipnis 2006; Tombaugh, 2009).

Despite the gap in literature of critical, psychological research on weddings, three seminal books have been written by academics critiquing the white wedding. These works are not specifically written from a psychological orientation; however, they do much to contribute to social psychology's understanding of wedding ceremonies. Later research studies have based many of their research ideas and questions on these seminal books (Carter, 2010; Humble, 2003; Sniezek, 2005; Tombaugh, 2009).

First, *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* (Ingraham, 1999) is a sociological exposé of the wedding industry. Ingraham (1999) conveys how weddings are constructed around heterosexuality and how, consequently, heterosexuality is institutionalised through the wedding ceremony. She identifies this as problematic and restrictive, because the white wedding reproduces patriarchal and

capitalist ideology, which in turn segregates social classes further, as it is a wealthy affair for white people. The social construction of gender through weddings is illuminated by suggesting that children are socialised towards desiring the white wedding through toys that represent wedding paraphernalia. She writes "women didn't enter this world knowing they wanted to […] buy a white wedding gown" (Ingraham, 1999, p. 3). Mass media is proposed as another significantly influential mechanism of transmitting and reproducing the performance of weddings. Furthermore, the research brings to the fore the capitalist nature of the wedding industry and how the appeal on the bride's fantasies of fairy-tale weddings encourages excessive consumerism and often debt. The author concludes with depicting white weddings as reinforcing patriarchal society. Although the content of Ingraham's book extends beyond the contents of this research, it has none-the-less been ground-breaking in the field of wedding research and has informed subsequent studies (see for example, Carter, 2010; Geller, 2001; Humble, 2003; Sniezek, 2005; Tombaugh, 2009).

Second, *Here Comes the Bride: Women, Weddings, and the Marriage Mystique* (Geller, 2001) is a thought-provoking critique of weddings and marriage in which the author goes undercover, pretending to be a bride-to-be. Her critique of the white wedding is based on some of her experiences as she engages with wedding planners, service providers and shop assistants, while she pretends to plan her wedding. She discovers that the bride always finds herself at the centre of attention during the wedding planning process, as well as on the wedding day. The broad account incorporates analyses from the marriage proposal to the bridal shower and finally of the wedding day and honeymoon. Geller (2001) extends her critique beyond gender specific wedding practices to the institution of marriage. She writes "marriage is a social institution firmly anchored in the notion of male dominance, and, in its every scripted ritual and gesture, the big white wedding reifies this tradition" (Geller, 2001, p. 382).

Ingraham (1999) and Geller's (2001) works share similarities in that they both critique the heteronormative nature of white weddings and suggest that homosexual couples are largely excluded from having their own traditional white wedding, because even where homosexual marriage is legal, the white wedding is a heteronormative practice. It becomes evident that, although wedding ceremonies are romantic celebrations for those involved, they do much to reproduce patriarchal ideology, which in turn ensures women's subordination. Interestingly, both of the abovementioned critiques identify that, even though the white wedding serves as a conduit to reproduce patriarchy, the bride actively performs most of the wedding planning work (Currie, 1993; Geller, 2001; Ingraham, 1999; Leonard, 2006). With both of these books one is led to question why women would encourage a patriarchal and sexist ritual so avidly (Geller, 2001; Ingraham, 1999).

Third, in *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* Otnes and Pleck (2003) evaluate, what they refer to as, the most important cultural ritual today. They maintain that the merging of culture, romance and consumption are combined to form the bride's lavish wedding, that they argue "encourage Cinderella fantasies of happily ever after, which lead to disappointment and divorce" (Otnes & Pleck, 2003, p. 274). Their research emphasises how consumer society is influential in the promotion of the Cinderella fantasy. The Cinderella or fairy-tale fantasy is central to wedding discourse (Ingraham, 1999). In sum, the narrative of a fairy-tale is comprised of a vulnerable woman who is rescued by a man with the possibility that she will be transformed into a princess (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). It is a story that ends with a promise of hope and a future that will be a 'happily-ever-after'. In weddings the princess role and the bride role are almost synonymous with each other, with the esteemed construction of the bride as princess (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). Although often incorporated as an analogy of the wedding, the fairy-tale story is unreal and largely unachievable (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). Furthermore, Otnes and Pleck (2003) critique the white wedding and mention that weddings and wedding planning encourages "couples to adjust to traditional

gender roles (which despite reinforcing the unequal status of women in public life presumably lends to greater stability in marriage)" (Otnes & Pleck, 2003, p. 274). Despite this critique they identify that people want to have a fairy-tale experience (Shrout, 2010). The authors suggest that single people are excluded from having their own lavish wedding, which translates into wedding envy (Leonard, 2006). They use this description of envy to propose that Geller's (2001) strong critique of weddings originates from her own wedding envy (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). This argument in some ways fails to identify Geller's (2001) intended critique of the restricted institution of marriage, but reinforces the pervasive idea of women's desire to marry (Leonard, 2006). Regardless of this, the book is similar to Ingraham (1999) and Geller's (2001) in that a focal point is to unveil the illusion and deception of the white wedding. Otnes and Pleck (2003) seem to have a less critical view of the white wedding than the previous authors, whereby *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* focuses more on the intersection of consumerism and romance.

Ingraham (1999), Geller (2001), and Otnes and Pleck (2003) introduce and build on the idea that the white wedding reinforces patriarchy. A sense of irony becomes apparent, since studies have shown that the amount of wedding planning that the bride performs far exceeds that of the groom (Currie, 1993; Lowrey & Otnes, 1994; Sniezek, 2005). Thus, the bride appears to be doing most of the work to encourage a ceremony, which is based on a patriarchal ideology that disadvantages her and women in general (Tombaugh, 2009). Research by Lowrey and Otnes (1994) examined the division of labour amongst couples during their wedding planning. Wedding planning, which included tasks that were similar to domestic work, was seen as the bride's task, while the groom's involvement in the wedding planning was uncommon as this would question his masculinity (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). "In fact, his masculine identity may be put at risk since tasks such as shopping and decorating are stereotypically defined as 'women's work'" (Sniezek, 2005, p. 231). Wedding booklets and brochures suggest to women that arranging a wedding requires a great deal of "good organisation,

forethought [and] planning" (The Marriage Meander Company, n.d., p. 2). Bridal magazines, wedding expos, bridal publications, bridal websites, service providers, films, advertisements, family and friends, amongst others, provide guidelines and prescriptions directed at brides as to what needs to be organised for a wedding. The wedding planning tasks are endless and to bring these tasks to completion most of the wedding planning will be completed by the bride (Sniezek, 2005). Bambacas (2002) also identifies "the bride as central to the planning of the white wedding" (p. 197). She elaborates on how weddings validate women and encourage their participation at centre stage. In spite of the attention and validation women receive, a paradox is clearly evident in that many traditions that are gender unequal and rooted in patriarchal traditions are still incorporated by the bride as part of the white wedding (Bambacas, 2002).

Tombaugh's (2009) research extends along this vein. She brings to the fore the privileges that women are afforded when they conform to traditional gender roles in weddings. She argues that through this conformity "patriarchal privilege is maintained" (Tombaugh, 2009, p. 107). Her research explores how the language surrounding weddings, namely wedding advice found online, is heteronormative and almost exclusively directed towards women, the primary planners of weddings. She notes that grooms are seldom addressed in wedding advice columns and are thereby less accountable than brides, affording grooms a privileged position (Tombaugh, 2009). Although the research illuminates the patriarchal nature of weddings, the argument provided as to why women conform to this appears to lack conclusive theoretical grounding.

Interestingly, in Sniezek's (2005) research she identifies that even though wedding planning work is divided unequally between the bride and the groom, couples will construct their wedding planning work "as a joint and equal enterprise" (p. 215). Constructing the unequal division of labour in wedding work as equal introduces a

dilemma; because the way couples do their wedding planning may influence how they later negotiate household and domestic tasks in their marriage (Humble, 2003). With cohabiting couples a gendered division of household labour may be a precursor to a gendered division of wedding labour. Research indicates that on the whole women perform a far greater amount of household work than men do, regardless of whether or not they are in paid employment outside the home (Sniezek, 2005). Similar to the discourse of equality regarding their wedding planning work, couples will use this discourse of equality when speaking about the division of household tasks (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). This in turn tends "to benefit men more than women" (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009, p. 6). Schweingruber and his colleagues (2004) aptly suggest that in heterosexual couple relationships "potential conflicts that would make power overt may be avoided because, by accepting standard notions of masculinity and femininity, members of the couple do not perceive anything problematic about the man's greater power in the relationship" (p. 144-145). This ties in with what Otnes and Pleck (2003) mention, that conforming to traditional gender roles in couple relationships reinforces "the unequal status of women in public life [but] presumably lends to greater stability in marriage" (p. 274). These statements suggest that by conforming to the status quo of traditional gender roles in relationship and constructing an unequal enterprise, such as household work, as equal, an illusion of fairness, which contributes to relational stability, is created. This relational stability is likely to benefit and disadvantage women (this point is considered in the following section under 3.2.3 Depressed Entitlement).

The research that resembles the current study most similarly is that of Carter (2010), whose PhD research seeks to answer the following questions: "Why are weddings not seen as pointless display? Why do society, and women, not question the practice? Why is it still viewed as a life goal and the ultimate in couple relationships?" (p. 9). Carter (2010) found that there is pressure from friends, family, the media and society in general to have a wedding and so the wedding becomes a display and performance, but

also a necessary rite of passage. Brides may also lose sight of what the actual meaning of their wedding signifies and therefore they do not question patriarchal practices. Although with Carter's (2010) second research question, namely, why women do not question the wedding practice, she considers the great paradox of why women participate in weddings, there is little data or evidence presented to account for this. The findings indicate that brides expressed a wish for traditional love and a long-term commitment, which would be achieved through a wedding (Carter, 2010). This research presents new understandings of women's desires to be married; however, the explanation appears to lack a theoretical foundation, does not answer the second research question conclusively and suggests an incomplete understanding of all the relevant powers and ideologies at play in the white wedding.

The abovementioned pioneering research, although at times somewhat dated, nevertheless sheds some light on the sparsely researched intersection of the psychology of gender and white weddings. One question that the research in the field of wedding work does not thoroughly answer concerns why women themselves would actively encourage and participate in a ritual that ultimately restricts them, encourages gender inequality and reinforces patriarchy (Kipnis, 2006; Tombaugh, 2009). Some speculation suggests that women benefit from weddings in that they are at the centre of the wedding performance and thus receive status, power and attention (Bambacas, 2002; Sniezek, 2005). Tombaugh (2009) notes that "women become complicit in their own subordination as the bridal role becomes linked to idealized femininity and society's norms regarding what women should be like" (p. 107). Pressure from friends, family and society is also proposed as a reason for encouraging and participating in the white wedding (Carter, 2010). These speculations on status, power, attention and pressure provide some insight as to why women actively participate in weddings and wedding planning and thus encourage their own subordination. Consequently it is noted that research on women's motivation to encourage their own subordination in weddings and wedding work is lacking. It is on this point that the current study seeks to apply theory

to research women's motivation in actively participating and encouraging the patriarchal wedding ritual.

### 3.1.4  Conclusion

Despite the predominantly favourable views held about wedding ceremonies, it is noticeable that many gender stereotypical and patriarchal traditions are still incorporated in the modern wedding (Fairchild, 2014; Ingraham, 1999). These traditions and rituals have shown their resistance to change and are nowadays also incorporated in weddings of other cultures (Cheng et al., 2008; Goldstein-Gidoni, 2000; Lee, Lee & Chung, 2011; Ma, 2006; Thulo, 2013). A traditional practice that has shown its resistance to change is that men are expected to initiate a marriage proposal, before which it is custom to ask the bride's father for his daughter's hand in marriage (Schweingruber et al., 2004). The woman then becomes an object to be given from father to groom (Bambacas, 2002; Butler, 1990). This, as seen above, is only the beginning of a myriad of patriarchal practices that eventually form the wedding (Geller, 2001).

Patriarchal practices disadvantage women and favour men; however, if this is the case then one would question why women readily participate in and support a patriarchal ritual that seemingly demeans their identity as a woman, objectifies them, exposes their sexual and marital status and may not be in their favour as a group (Tombaugh, 2009). Monger (2004) states in the introductory extract that the patriarchal nature of marriage is evident, yet the bride may derive pleasure from the wedding planning and the wedding itself. She is also afforded attention and a privileged position during her wedding (Tombaugh, 2009). One could argue that perhaps women are not aware of patriarchal undertones and meanings in the wedding ceremony, perhaps the wedding tradition is an authority that is obeyed without obeying one's own desires or perhaps women know of no viable alternatives to the traditional white wedding (Fox, 1999; Paprzycka, 2002). This brings to the fore a more pertinent question: If women are

questioned on the patriarchal practices of their white wedding, how do they reconcile the behaviour of actively encouraging and participating in the wedding ritual with their knowledge of what patriarchy does? To develop a greater understanding of why women as a subordinate group would participate in the wedding ritual, which encourages their subordination even further, the following chapter explores research on system justification theory with a particular emphasis on depressed entitlement, out-group contact and ideological dissonance.

## 3.2 System Justification Theory

### 3.2.1 Introduction

Over two decades ago the concept of system justification was formally introduced by Jost and Banaji (1994) to explain that existing social arrangements are maintained, surprisingly, even at the disadvantage of personal or group interests. A central objective of system justification theory (SJT) has been to understand "*how* and *why* people provide cognitive and ideological support for the status quo, even when their support appears to conflict with personal and group interests" (Jost, 2011, p. 223-224; emphasis in original). Jost and Banaji (1994) suggested that *false consciousness* and stereotypes were at the root of system justification processes. For over two decades the quantitative research on SJT has expanded steadily and significantly. The research on SJT has been applied to study a range of controversial social psychological phenomena, such as social class, religion, management, politics, race and gender, suggesting its relevance in studying unequal relationships between social groups (see for example Thorisdottir, Jost & Kay, 2009).

In this chapter the main theories that originally formed the historical foundation of SJT are briefly mentioned. From this, the tenets of SJT are reviewed and discussed with a particular focus on the literature regarding gender relations. A more in-depth review of the studies related to depressed entitlement, out-group contact and ideological dissonance provides empirical support for system justification by women and men. It is evident that a variety of factors, such as *false consciousness*, stereotypes and ideology continue to encourage the maintenance of the status quo in patriarchal society (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon & Sullivan, 2003; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

## 3.2.2  System Justification Theory

SJT seeks to account for the motivation to preserve existing social arrangements, even if these social arrangements are noticeably unequal (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). SJT was originally developed by Jost and Banaji (1994), who built on social identity theory, belief in a just world, cognitive dissonance theory, marxist-feminist theories of ideology and social dominance theory (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). These influential theories, as well as some of their limitations, are briefly mentioned below. The limitations of these theories served to motivate for the development of a theory on system justification, "whereby people justify and rationalise the way things are, so that existing social arrangements are perceived as fair and legitimate, perhaps even natural and inevitable" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 119).

### 3.2.2.1  Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory draws on the idea that intergroup behaviours can be explained through social identity, which is basically understood as the view a person has of themselves based on the groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Tajfel and Turner (1986) identified that previous research had focused on the interpersonal processes of discrimination and prejudice. Consequently, their research focused on intergroup processes. It suggests that people who share a group identity will aim to have their group evaluated favourably. Patriotism is an example of where a favourable social identity is particularly noticeable. When a group receives a negative evaluation, other social groups who recognise this evaluation as negative may gravitate from this group, because they do not want to be associated with this negative evaluation. The evaluations that are formed of social groups allow for the formation of stereotypes. Stereotypes in turn allow for the rationalisation of these specific social identities (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Tajfel, 1981). If the system in which groups function is perceived as legitimate and stable people are motivated even more to employ stereotypes to justify

why a system is fair (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity theory was built on realistic group conflict theory, which proposed that intergroup conflict was caused by a conflict in group interests (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, realistic group conflict theory could not account adequately for out-group favouritism. Although Tajfel and Turner (1986) reiterate previous research that subordinate groups would tend to favour the dominant out-group, which is a central tenet in SJT, it is argued by Jost and Hunyady (2002) that SJT "provides a better and more complete account of outgroup favouritism among low-status groups than a social identity perspective does" (p. 115; Jost, 2011).

### 3.2.2.2 Belief in a Just World

Lerner (1980) found that people are motivated to believe in a just and fair world, whereby people "get what they deserve and deserve what they get" (p. 11). For example, the belief that a criminal will be punished by the law or fate would be in line with the belief in a just world. There may be varying consequences of this within existing social arrangements for dominant and subordinate groups. For dominant groups such justification promotes their self-interest, while for subordinate groups the belief in a just world could contribute to self-blame, and particularly victim-blaming (Jost, Gaucher & Stern, 2015; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). With reference to the belief in a just world Jost and his colleagues (2015) eloquently state that "individuals distort notions of deservingness and justice to maintain a conception of the world as not only predictable and controllable but also fair and just" (p. 320). SJT expands on the belief in a just world by emphasising the role of ideology and social learning to justify and legitimise existing social arrangements (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

### 3.2.2.3 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive dissonance theory proposes that individuals are motivated to preserve cognitive consistency, in terms of cognitions, such as their beliefs, opinions and

attitudes (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance applies when individuals notice an inconsistency between their attitudes and their behaviours; consequently there may be a shift in attitude to account for specific behaviour (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). For example, a wife who recognises that she performs a far greater share of housework than her husband, may, rather than addressing the dissonance, change her attitude and say that she is the superior cleaner. Interestingly, when cognitive dissonance is greater, individuals have a greater need to justify the dissonance (Jost et al., 2003). Cognitive dissonance theory and SJT share similarities; however, SJT emphasises the influence of the social system, people's need to justify a system that is not determined by their sense of responsibility for the system and that people will justify existing social arrangements even if this enhances dissonance (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

### 3.2.2.4 Marxist-Feminist Theories of Ideology

Marx and Engels (1970) argued that the ruling class ideology, and therefore the dominant ideology, justifies and legitimises domination, exploitation and oppression by dominants of subordinates. The most obvious example mentioned by Marx and Engels (1970) is that of the bourgeoisie owning the means of production, whereas the proletariat hold the labour-power and consequently sell their labour-power to increase the wealth of the dominant groups. Although dominant ideology may not benefit subordinates, it remains the ideology that determines oppressive social arrangements, suggesting that a *false consciousness* amongst subordinate groups encourages this (Fox, 1999; Jost & Hunyady, 2002). This chapter presents a particular focus on gender and from this perspective within patriarchal society women are the disadvantaged subordinates, while men are the advantaged dominants (Woodward & Woodward, 2009). For the development of SJT, Jost and Banaji (1994) made use of the concept of *false consciousness* to understand the pervasiveness of many stereotypes and the occurrence of out-group favouritism. A brief discussion on *false consciousness* follows later under 3.2.2.6 Ego and Group Justification.

### 3.2.2.5   Social Dominance Theory

Social dominance theory built on theories, such as social identity theory (Jost, 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). It identifies that social systems are structured according to hierarchies and, thus, advocates the idea that social hierarchies are established to justify domination and oppression (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993). In patriarchal society, for example, men hold a higher rank in the social hierarchy compared to women and therefore men hold more power (O'Connor & Drury, 1999; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SJT drew on the aspects of social dominance theory that suggest that stereotypes and ideologies justify unequal social systems (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Similar to SJT, social dominance theory recognised that out-group favouritism and self-debilitation are factors that encourage group-based social hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The concept of self-debilitation is akin to what SJT would term depressed entitlement (discussed later in this chapter under 3.2.3 Depressed Entitlement). However, contrasted to SJT, social dominance theory advocates that the existence of hierarchies and oppression is almost unavoidable (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993). A more detailed summary of the limitations and areas of agreement and disagreement of social identity theory and social dominance theory can be found in Jost's (2011) chapter on exactly this comparison. Social dominance theory, along with the previous theories mentioned (perhaps with the exclusion of marxist-feminist theories of ideology) focus more on justification of the self and the in-group, whereas SJT maintains that the influence of the social system often trumps that of ego and group justification (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

### 3.2.2.6   Ego and Group Justification

Unlike the theories mentioned above, SJT was presented as a theory that could account for the many limitations of the ego justification and group justification aspects of these

theories, as well as to expand on the work of these key theories (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Ego and group justification had become prevalent in many theories, such as those mentioned above; yet, Jost and Banaji (1994) maintained that these modes of justification could not account for certain behaviours. For instance, ego justification occurs on an individual level, whereby the individual preserves and promotes their self-esteem and identity by justifying themselves and presenting themselves favourably, yet, the limitations of ego justification are that it cannot explain: negative stereotypes of oneself, stereotyping without the need to justify and the universality of some stereotypes (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

Similarly, group justification occurs by defending the identity of one's group and the identity of in-group members; however, the limitations of group justification are that it fails to explain why some stereotypes remain the same, not only within, but also across groups and why subordinate groups may hold negative views of their in-group, whereas it was previously believed that all individuals would hold favourable views of their in-group and negative views of the out-group (Allport, 1958; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). Research has shown that subordinate groups tend to show out-group favouritism of the dominant group (Dixon, Levine, Reicher & Durrheim, 2012; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This research will be reviewed in greater depth later on in this chapter under 3.2.4 Out-Group Contact. It is from the limitations of ego and group justification theory that SJT arose as a theory to explain why maintaining the status quo of an existing system holds greater importance than defending individual or group interests.

Within their theory, Jost and Banaji (1994) placed a large emphasis on the role of stereotypes in system-justifying processes, motivating that this added to the existing understandings of ego and group justification. Stereotypes are positive, negative or neutral belief systems "in which psychological characteristics are ascribed more or less indiscriminately to the members of a group" (Jost & Hamilton, 2005, p. 209). Hence, stereotypes account for, legitimise and justify the disadvantage of some groups and the

advantage of others (Jost & Burgess, 2000). Research suggests that stereotypes serve an ideological function, whereby the exploitation of subordinate groups is justified (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). To illustrate this by use of an example, the stereotype that women are more communal and less agentic provides an explanation as to why fewer women are managers compared to men, namely, because the stereotype suggests that women make poor leaders or managers (Aycan, 2004; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Rudman & Glick, 2001). As a result, gender stereotypes further serve to rationalise the division of labour between women and men, while the division of labour simultaneously supports gender stereotypes (Jost & Banaji, 1994). It is the holding of these stereotypes by women and men, for example that cannot be understood through a lens of ego or group justification, since women and men may hold negative stereotypes of themselves and their group (Zimmermann & Gygax, in press). Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986) have identified this compliance with the status quo as a social creativity strategy, whereby women, realising that they are unable to change unequal social arrangements, adopt beliefs that justify this system. By doing this women are able to rationalise and justify the disadvantaged position they find themselves in. There are at least three ways that subordinates can employ social creativity strategies to reconstruct the meaning of their subordinate position. Reicher, Spears and Haslam (2010) aptly summarised that this could be done, either:

(a) by seeking to compare the ingroup with other groups that are even more disadvantaged (e.g., as if to say "we may be poorer than the very rich, but at least we're better off than the very poor"), (b) by evaluating the ingroup on more flattering dimensions of comparison ("we may be poor but we're friendly"), or (c) by attempting to redefine the meaning of the ingroup membership ("blessed are the poor") (p. 51).

Consequently, SJT drew from social creativity strategies and it is, thus, argued that SJT provides a more appropriate theory to understand how stereotypes legitimise the status quo and the existence of inequalities (Jost & Hamilton, 2005; Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

As mentioned, stereotypes are not only used by people in advantaged positions to justify inequalities (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Stereotypes tend to be accepted by subordinates, because they reflect the dominant ideology (Jackman & Muha, 1984). On this point Jost and Banaji (1994) drew heavily from the work of Marx and Engels (1970), who theorised that because dominant groups hold the majority of the power their ideas, beliefs and values influence and determine the ideas, beliefs and values of subordinate groups. These internalisations of what is believed to be false beliefs result in false attributions and stereotypes that are generalisations made by both subordinates and dominants of groups of people who are not necessarily true and lead to, what Jost and Banaji (1994) describe as, *false consciousness* (Fox, 1999; Jost & Burgess, 2000). They define this *false consciousness* as the "holding of false beliefs that are contrary to one's social interest and which thereby contribute to the disadvantaged position of the self or the group" (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p. 3). There is a great deal of critique and contention on the theory of *false consciousness*, because one line of thought suggests that people are not dupes of their social world. From this angle it is assumed that subordinate groups are not manipulated, but can think for themselves regardless of the dominant ideology. On the other hand, numerous academics have argued that societal inequalities are internalised by individuals (see Jost, 2011). It is consequently suggested that *false consciousness* contributes to explaining why discrimination and oppression exist, and therefore *false consciousness* is considered to be a relevant theory to understand why subordinates accept social inequalities (for example, Fox, 1999; Harcourt, 2011; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, 1995; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Paprzycka, 2002). Because "people can be systematically mistaken about their own best interest" (Harcourt, 2011, p. 29), *false consciousness* reflects why the acceptance of the dominant ideology and upholding the existing social arrangement is likely to be disadvantageous

to subordinates. Furthermore, research has indicated that when there is opposition of the dominant ideology of a system people will to a greater extent employ stereotypes to support the status quo (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Through this, the dominant ideology is maintained.

Overall, the effects of system justification suggest that there are fewer benefits of employing system-justifying motives for subordinate groups (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Studies cited in Jost and Hunyady (2002) have shown that system justification for dominant groups is associated with increased self-esteem and decreased depression and neuroticism, while the converse applies to subordinate groups, whereby system justification is associated with decreased self-esteem and increased depression and neuroticism. Consequently, these studies, as well as others (for example, Calogero & Jost, 2011; Jost & Hunyady, 2005), suggest that the psychological implications of system justification for subordinate groups are not in their favour, yet, subordinate groups still provide support for the status quo. The following sections explore how women and men enable system justification to the detriment of women, and how, despite the disadvantage that this brings, women provide support for the status quo.

### 3.2.3   Depressed Entitlement

According to SJT dominant and subordinate groups "are motivated to preserve the belief that existing social arrangements are fair, legitimate, justifiable and necessary" (Jost et al., 2003, p. 13). Therefore, women as a subordinate and oppressed group may maintain social inequalities that disadvantage themselves (Jost, 1995; Jost, 1997). Through the dilemma of holding a disadvantaged position and maintaining this position, inferiority is internalised and a depressed sense of entitlement is reinforced. Jost (1997) studied the depressed sense of entitlement of female and male university students in the USA. The study implicated the self-payment of the female and male participants for work rendered. The results indicated that women paid themselves significantly less than

their male counterparts, even though the quality of work rendered by the female and male participants did not differ. This suggests that women believe they deserve less than men (Jost, 1997). A sense of depressed entitlement by women has also been noted with salary negotiations. When the option of salary negotiations is not given women are less likely to negotiate a salary, than men are (Leibbrandt & List, 2012).

Conversely, findings have shown that men's greater sense of entitlement might encourage higher salary negotiations (O'Brien, Major & Gilbert, 2012). The authors of this research define personal entitlement as "the outcomes that people believe they personally deserve to receive as a result of their inputs" (O'Brien et al., 2012, p. 136). The studies showed that when system-justifying beliefs were activated there were differences in what women and men believed they should receive as a salary, with women showing a depressed sense of entitlement and men showing a greater sense of entitlement (O'Brien, 2012).

Similarly, in another study women indicated that because they were paid less they believed that their work was worth less compared to people who were paid more (Pelham & Hetts, 2001). Consequently, simply because of their already lower status women may reinforce their status as being lower than that of men. Women may also lower their expectations and rationalise and justify the status quo and their disadvantage, because they "internalise and adapt to economic inequality" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 138). It is argued that since women have self-stigmatising beliefs about themselves, as well as other women, they provide good conduits for preserving dominant ideology (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003; O'Brien et al., 2012).

Further research has found that women's depressed sense of entitlement is also noticeable in the division of household labour (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). Even when women are employed outside the home, they are more likely to engage in a greater amount of routine domestic responsibilities. Dixon and Wetherell (2004) cite a large

body of research on how women spend far more time on childcare and housework. Compared to men, women spend on average 35 hours more on childcare and 15 hours more on housework per week (Baxter, 2000). Surprisingly, most participants in this study believed that the unequal division of their domestic labour was fair (Baxter, 2000). An element of *false consciousness* is present, whereby women hold disadvantageous beliefs that maintain their disadvantaged position (Jost & Banaji, 1994). This *false consciousness* allows for a depressed sense of entitlement to exist, namely, women believe that they must complete more housework than men (Jost, 1995). In addition, stereotypical gender roles are influential in prescribing which tasks are more feminine (for example, shopping, cleaning, cooking and childcare) and thus not suitable for men to do (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). The result is that women find themselves in a paradoxical position, if they rebel against their stereotypical gender role and address the unequal division of household labour then marital conflict and instability is inclined to increase (Otnes & Pleck, 2003; Sniezek, 2005). Therefore it may be less anxiety provoking for women to label an unfair arrangement as fair, rather than fighting against a system that is resistant to change (Carvallo & Pelham, 2006). Thus, if women have a depressed sense of entitlement and expect less for themselves based on the product of their labour, they can alleviate psychological distress by justifying that existing arrangements are fair. This in turn suggests that the unequal distribution of household labour represents a facet of depressed entitlement and encourages system justification motives (Jost et al., 2004).

Depressed entitlement has also been observed in the distribution of labour between women and men during their wedding planning work, which is similar to housework and may include "decorating, making meal choices, shopping and coordinating family schedules" (Sniezek, 2005, p. 216; Currie, 1993). Sniezek (2005) found that during wedding planning women will engage in more of the wedding planning and the significant point here is that couples do not view their distribution of labour as unequal, but instead construct a narrative of equal and joint participation. The results of these

research studies provide support for subordinates' depressed sense of entitlement and for their contribution in the maintenance of the dominant ideology and thus system justification.

### 3.2.4  Out-Group Contact

It was previously believed that fostering relationships between subordinate and dominant groups would encourage friendships and reduce stereotyping (Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994). However, research has repeatedly shown that encouraging positive and friendly contact between subordinate and dominant groups fosters discrimination (Dixon et al., 2012). As a result out-group contact increases system justification, to the disadvantage of subordinate groups (Jackman & Crane, 1986; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). For example, during contact between women and men, men will express a positive attitude towards women, possibly because men depend on women to meet domestic, emotional and sexual needs; however, the encouragement of equal rights for women will be withheld (Jackman & Crane, 1986; Rudman & Glick, 2001). It is noteworthy that withholding equal rights for women benefits men, because they are able to maintain their dominant position.

As mentioned in the previous section, women indicate a depressed sense of entitlement in the division of household labour, whereby women will perform a greater amount of childcare and housework compared to men (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004; Sniezek, 2005). This unequal division of labour occurs within the immediate contact with the out-group. Rather than discouraging inequality, the close contact that women and men share in romantic relationships enables the acceptance of an unequal division of labour (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). In romantic relationships men behave with paternalism and chivalry towards women who observe traditional and complementary gender roles (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). Therefore, "under sexist ideology, women receive special privileges as long as they stay in line" (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy & Glick,

1999, p. 484). Favourable attitudes towards women consequently encourage complementary stereotypes between women and men and thus maintain gender inequality (Glick & Fiske, 2001). In stark contrast to this, if women do not conform to their gender role they are at risk of negative consequences, such as backlash (discussed later in this chapter under 3.2.5 Ideological Dissonance) (Butler, 1988; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Research by Jost and Kay (2005) showed that exposing women and men to complementary stereotypes, which suggest that women are communal and men are agentic, increases support for the status quo, and consequently for gender inequalities between women and men (Jost & Hamilton, 2005). Furthermore "gendered power differentials are often hard to see because they are embedded in taken-for-granted differences" (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009, p. 5). Although stereotyping women as communal is not necessarily negative in its content, it can have negative and prejudicial consequences for women (Jost & Kay, 2005). For example, stereotyping women as communal encourages women to fulfil the role of homemaker, to which a lower status is attached (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). This indicates that stereotypes may initially seem positive, but on closer inspection have negative implications, especially for subordinates (Jost & Kay, 2005). Similarly, stereotyping men as agentic encourages the notion that men are the breadwinners and providers (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). This in turn creates inequalities between women and men, because as men provide financially for women, women relinquish independence and power (Dixon et al., 2012). Thus, women become dependent on men and their subordinate position is reinforced. Interestingly, when men are providers it gives women an explanation of why they have less and why men have more. This consequently contributes towards women internalising their own subordination (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013).

The process of performing complementary gender stereotypes does not happen suddenly in adulthood, it begins as part of development in early childhood (Butler,

1993). Young girls and boys are taught from an early age how to be a girl or boy and how to perceive gender differences (Diamond, 2000). The gender performance that occurs allows for the acceptance of unequal gender roles (Butler, 1988). Chodorow (1989) writes "we are not born with perceptions of gender differences; these emerge developmentally" (p. 108). Despite this, the effects of gender stereotypes and gender roles are visible with girls and boys in childhood (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). Research indicates that even in childhood girls engage in more housework than boys (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). The authors of this research identify this as problematic, since socialisation and out-group contact encourages and maintains existing ideology and consequently gender inequality. The social structure in which women and men eventually function becomes a natural and ingrained aspect of their existence.

Jackman (1994) found that out-group contact encourages benevolent feelings towards the subordinate group. With regards to gender these benevolent feelings idealise women and are protective and paternalistic in nature; these feelings are better known as benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Benevolent sexism implies that women are warm and nurturing, but incompetent (Jost & Kay, 2005). It is believed that within a benevolent sexist framework women cannot be both warm and competent and so benevolent sexism continues to limit women's independence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002; Viki, Abrams & Hutchison, 2003). Benevolent sexism maintains complementary gender stereotypes, because it puts 'traditional' women on a pedestal (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). By conforming to complementary gender stereotypes women afford themselves respect and acceptance by men; however, complementary gender stereotypes encourage sexism and present a barrier to gender equality by legitimising gender differences (Cikara, Lee, Fiske & Glick, 2009; Viki et al., 2003; Wood & Eagly, 2002). Interestingly, women are as likely as men to validate benevolent forms of sexism (Jost & Kay, 2005). Women may support benevolently sexist attitudes, because these attitudes are favourably prosocial, chivalrous and romantic towards women (Glick et al.,

2000; Rudman & Heppen, 2003). Consequently, benevolent sexism prevents gender equality, because it encourages women to conform to the female-specific gender role, to support patriarchy as the status quo and to avoid collective action, which would promote social change (Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 2001). A further problem is that benevolent sexism is disguised and mostly not recognised as sexism, because it gives a more paternalistic and less violent impression. However, Calogero and Jost (2011) found that exposure to benevolent sexism increased body shame, self-objectification and self-surveillance in women, which suggests that there are negative psychological consequences to benevolent sexism for women. Benevolent sexism differs from hostile sexism in that hostile sexism embraces negative and controlling attitudes towards women, such as the domination of women, beliefs that belittle women and open hostility towards women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Furthermore, hostile sexism "seeks to justify male power, traditional gender roles, and men's exploitation of women as sexual objects through derogatory characterizations of women" (Glick & Fiske, 1997, p. 121). Despite their differences, since benevolent sexism appears much gentler than hostile sexism, both benevolent and hostile sexism encourage women's subordination (Cikara et al., 2009).

In their research Glick and Fiske (1997) collected data on the ambivalent sexism inventory, which asked for statements related to benevolent and hostile sexism to be rated in terms of whether the participant agreed or disagreed. A statement measuring benevolent sexism stated "in a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men" (p. 135). Reversed marking on this item indicates a person's level of benevolent sexism. In this case, in line with benevolent sexism, respondents may state that women should be rescued before men, which is assumed to be kind, caring and considerate; however, it also implicitly emphasises the notion that women are the 'weaker sex' and must be protected (Viki et al., 2003). Constructing women as the 'weaker sex' serves the interests of men and ultimately disadvantages women (Beauvoir, 1972). In the rare instances when women are aware of the condescension

they may believe that they cannot oppose inequalities, because they feel indulged and flattered with some of the ways in which they are viewed, especially when "chivalrous men are willing to sacrifice their own well-being to provide for and protect women" (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 115). This creates a dilemma, as benevolent sexism continues to maintain women's subordination (Jost, 1995).

What makes this dilemma more problematic is that research conducted in South Africa indicates that women's benevolent sexism scores are higher than men's benevolent sexism scores (Glick et al., 2000). This is rather unusual and peculiar since one would expect the oppressive beliefs and behaviours of the dominant group to exceed those of the subordinate group (Glick & Fiske, 2001). One explanation for this unusual result may be that due to excessively high rates of hostile sexism in South Africa women fear sexist hostility and then turn to men for protection, which encourages benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Hasse, 2015). Recent statistics presented in the *Africa Survey* (Hasse, 2015) revealed that although some progress has been made with regards to gender equality in South Africa, vast inequalities still exist on dimensions such as constitutional rights ensuring equal gender rights, legislation on sexual harassment, women in political positions of power, women's labour force participation, equal remuneration for women and men and gender based violence. As this sexist whirlpool continues and the dominant ideology is reinforced, even on a national governance level, women may lean towards the sexist beliefs of the dominant group, because they feel protected within these beliefs and behaviours (Dominelli, 2002). Women may also realise that, because they welcome the privileges they receive through benevolently sexist acts they cannot oppose the hostile sexism that is directed towards them (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Zimmerman & Gygax, in press).

Interestingly, in their research Jost and Burgess (2000) obtained results on low and high status groups and their perception of the in- and out-group. Low status group members indicated higher out-group favouritism (Jost & Burgess, 2000). Their study also showed

that subordinates indicate greater ambivalence towards their in-group than dominants do (Jost & Burgess, 2000). When applying these findings to intergroup relationships between women and men, it suggests that women's need, to belong to the dominant out-group, is great. An additional effect of this is that in-group solidarity for subordinates is decreased (Carvallo & Pelham, 2006). Women then experience less of an attachment to their own group, but prefer to be liked by the dominant out-group. Jost and Burgess (2000) reason, that this provides evidence of system justification. With subordinates preferring the dominant out-group they preserve the existing social arrangement. The subordinate group's ambivalent feelings towards the in-group in turn supports the notion that group justification is inadequate in explaining why individuals in a group do not always hold favourable views of their group (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

In summary, out-group contact has negative effects for subordinate groups (Jackman, 1994). Research has indicted that if men support sexist ideologies, women were more likely to do so as well (Glick & Fiske, 2001). As a result subordinate groups will tend to support unequal social arrangements and therefore encourage system justification (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). Out-group contact also enhances a favourable view of the out-group, which then fostered affection for out-group members (Carvallo & Pelham, 2006; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). Subordinate groups are then less likely to, firstly, identify social inequalities and, secondly, support their group's best interests (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). Consequently out-group contact and out-group favouritism are both mechanisms through which system justification is enabled and supported. Interestingly, even without having out-group contact per se subordinate groups may still indicate a more positive attitude towards the out-group than towards their own disadvantaged group (Jost, 2011).

### 3.2.5  Ideological Dissonance

Ideological dissonance is grounded in cognitive dissonance theory and has the potential to be produced in systems where social inequality exists (Festinger, 1957; Jost et al., 2003). For example, by engaging and participating in a relationship that is characterised by inequality ideological dissonance follows. There is a sense that existing social arrangements are unequal. When ideological dissonance occurs there is a need to reduce it in favour of the existing system (Jost, 2011). The great paradox that is repeatedly noted above is that it is sometimes the most disadvantaged that show the greatest support for an oppressive system (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Surprisingly, when ideological dissonance occurs subordinate groups, who are the most disadvantaged by the status quo, have the greatest need and highest motivation to rationalise and justify the overarching ideology under which they function (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). But why would subordinate groups or specifically women, as referred to in this chapter, support an unequal status quo, when it appears that through the status quo they are clearly disadvantaged individually and as part of a member of their subordinate group (Jost, 2011)? By answering this paradoxical question SJT challenges previous theories that have been unable to account for this, such as social identity theory, belief in a just world, cognitive dissonance theory, marxist-feminist theories of ideology and social dominance theory, and suggests that there are psychological benefits to system justification (Jost, 2011; Jost et al., 2004). System justification strategies serve the function of reducing dissonance and may therefore be used more when existing social arrangements cause greater ideological dissonance (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost et al., 2003). It appears to be less problematic to justify an unequal ideology than to admit that it is unfair or to try to change the ideology (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013).

This raises possibly the most significant contribution of SJT for this research, which is that engaging a system-justifying stance provides a palliative function for subordinate

groups. Overall, system-justifying ideologies have positive and alleviating functions "in that they reduce anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty for those who are advantaged and disadvantaged" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 111). Studies have found that when individuals justify existing social arrangements their subjective well-being and life satisfaction is increased (Harding & Sibley, 2013; Napier, Thorisdottir & Jost, 2010). Jost and Hunyady (2002) argue that system justification is used to deal with situations that cannot be changed, so that the perception of life being fair and just is created. By rationalising the status quo individuals create a sense of control (Jost et al., 2003). This comforting function of system justification is noticeable in an example mentioned earlier; whereby women choose not to address inequalities in the distribution of household labour for fear that it may increase marital discord (Sniezek, 2005). Consequently, women, as a subordinate group, may explain the unequal distribution of household labour as fair, because they are aware that little can be done to change the status quo (Jost et al., 2003). When combined with positive out-group contact with men and a depressed sense of entitlement, women will be even more likely to rely on the soothing functions of system justification to reduce dissonance between their beliefs and behaviours (Dixon et al., 2012; O'Brien et al., 2012). When societies are particularly unequal, which may be the case in terms of gender inequality in South Africa, women are likely to employ almost any justification to achieve a bearable result for themselves (Hasse, 2015; Napier et al., 2010).

Despite the palliative function of system justification the obvious negative consequences of this are that not challenging the social system has negative psychological effects and social change is prevented by justifying the existing social arrangements (Harding & Sibley, 2013). People who oppose the status quo may experience unfavourable consequences, such as women experiencing backlash when they do not conform to stereotypical gender roles (Gaucher & Jost, 2011; Negra, 2009). The backlash effect is when agentic women experience a negative evaluation, because they have disregarded expectations of how communal women should be; namely when

women do not conform to traditional gender roles they experience negative consequences (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Specifically, Rudman and Glick (2001) found that women can show communal traits and be liked, but they will not be respected, or they can show agentic traits and be disliked, yet respected. Interestingly, being communal is also linked to being subordinate, which suggests that complimentary gender stereotypes encourage women's subordination (Napier et al., 2010). Consequently, subordinate groups may find it preferable to justify the existing social arrangements, rather than oppose them.

### 3.2.6 Conclusion

In their reflections on a decade of SJT Jost and his colleagues (2004) mention the four tenets of SJT as "(a) there is a general ideological motive to justify the existing social order, (b) this motive is at least partially responsible for the internalization of inferiority among members of disadvantaged groups, (c) it is observed most readily at an implicit, nonconscious level of awareness and (d) paradoxically, it is sometimes strongest among those who are most harmed by the status quo" (p. 881). This suggests that subordinate and dominant groups seek to preserve the status quo. One way in which this is done, most likely on a nonconscious level, is through women's depressed sense of entitlement, whereby they hold beliefs that they do not deserve as much as men do (Jost, 1997; van der Toorn, Tyler & Jost, 2011). Women's *false consciousness*, as the holding of disadvantageous beliefs that maintain their disadvantaged position, is probably greatly influential in the manifestation of this depressed sense of entitlement (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Another way in which system justification occurs is through out-group contact (Dixon et al., 2012). Through out-group contact subordinate groups will internalise the ideas, values and stereotypes that the dominant group holds about them and therefore they may not dispute existing inequalities, because they implicitly agree with them (Nosek, Banaji & Greenwald, 2002). Research suggests that people hold stereotypes of their own group, even if this is not in their favour (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Therefore, through (positive) out-group contact subordinate groups encourage their own subordination (Tombaugh, 2009).

The most astounding facet of SJT is probably that subordinate groups, although they are the most disadvantaged, show the greatest support for unequal and oppressive ideologies (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). It would be expected that subordinate groups would not support, but instead oppose their disadvantaged position, because this may prove to be in their best interest (Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002). From this perspective it is evident that system justification serves a significant purpose for subordinate groups in that it meets social and psychological needs by legitimising the status quo and defining it as just, fair and necessary (Jost et al., 2004). As such system justification reduces ideological dissonance and provides other relieving effects for subordinates and dominants (Jost et al., 2003).

In their ground-breaking paper on SJT Jost and Banaji (1994) stipulate that "in order for the concept of system-justification to be useful, future research would need to identify conditions that produce responses of system-justification" (p. 16). This is indeed what subsequent studies on SJT have sought to research and it is within this understanding that the current study on discourses as an instrument of system justification in Eurocentric, white, heterosexual wedding ceremonies is situated. The fundamental questions that this research study seeks to answer are: *how* do women support existing social arrangements, although these social arrangements are ultimately not in their favour? And *why* do women support existing social arrangements, although these social arrangements are ultimately not in their favour? Through the literature reviewed above, this study hypothesises that women will support the status quo by engaging system-justifying mechanisms, which will reduce ideological dissonance and fulfil a palliative function for them. This study aims to contribute to the already large body of research supporting SJT; however, by studying brides and grooms' discourses about their white wedding, this research adds a novel contribution to SJT. Since wedding ceremonies are

normative and formative rituals that mark a particularly significant milestone for people in society, they are transmitters of norms, practices and ideology (Montemurro, 2005). Consequently, the importance of identifying and understanding social practices that perpetuate gender inequality and prevent social change is apparent. The gap in literature and research is plain and evident, with no research in this particular area having been found. The planning of wedding ceremonies, as a site in which women and men are in close contact, presents an ideal environment in which to study interactions between subordinate and dominant groups and the possible effects of system justification.

# 4   Aim and Rationale

White weddings are patriarchal rituals that are gender unequal; however, women actively and eagerly engage in, conform to, encourage and support gender biased wedding practices (Heise, 2012). This is evident in how women fervently participate in gender unequal wedding rituals and how they engage in most of the wedding planning work (Sniezek, 2005). The current study broadly aims to uncover how and why women support existing social arrangements through their white wedding, despite these social arrangements ultimately not being in their favour as a group. It appears that there is some motivation for women to participate in this significant and formative ritual.

SJT is applied as a framework to investigate how and why white wedding discourses perpetuate these patriarchal wedding practices. It is understood that discourses related to the white wedding are influential in constructing beliefs which are particularly restrictive to women (Woods, 2006). To summarise: this research aims to study how system justification is present in heterosexual white weddings, how system justification contributes towards the performance and reproduction of gender unequal practices and how and why couples justify the gender unequal nature of the white wedding through commonly used discourses.

The rationale for this study is to expose taken-for-granted sexist wedding practices that are influential in maintaining and promoting gender inequality. This study intends to raise consciousness and awareness on how women enable their own subordination by actively participating in and supporting the white wedding. From this understanding it is anticipated that by identifying sexist wedding practices women and men are equipped to identify gender inequality in traditional wedding rituals, to challenge these gender biased practices and to encourage social change towards the emancipation of women, which would in turn promote gender equality.

# 5 Methodology

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research methodology of this study is outlined. A qualitative research design was identified as most suitable for this study, because qualitative studies seek to discover meaning that participants ascribe to their experience, they consider the influence of broader social systems and they locate obstacles that prevent social change (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Since the main aim of the research was to discover *how and why women support existing social arrangements through their white wedding, despite these social arrangements ultimately not being in their favour as a group,* a qualitative study from a social constructionist paradigm would meet this aim. Social constructionism considers that meaning is constructed historically and culturally, and is context dependent and subjective (Kiguwa, 2004). It also considers the importance of language and how language is used to construct meaningful experiences, such as weddings. Therefore, discourse analysis as a method of data collection and data analysis is presented as a tool to uncover the context dependent and subjective meaning, especially since "discourse is a form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world – including knowledge, identities and social relations – and thereby in maintaining specific social patterns" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). As an analytic tool, discourse analysis served well to reflect on the participants' language in the process of meaning-making. This methodology chapter also illustrates how the participants were selected based on specific demographics that were relevant for the research. Lastly, the ethical considerations relevant to this study are mentioned.

## 5.2 Research Design

The research design was developed to answer the research question as comprehensively as possible (Durrheim, 1999). A qualitative research design formed an

appropriate framework for this study. Initially an ethnographic study was considered as the most suitable method, because it seeks to study the behaviour of individuals, groups or societies in their specific contexts (O'Reilly, 2009). However, after a great deal of reading into ethnographic studies and the consideration of the ethical implications related to the researcher attending participant's weddings, never mind if the couple would want a 'stranger' conducting research at their wedding, it was decided that a post-hoc study of brides' and grooms' experiences of their wedding and their wedding planning would provide richer data about how couples create a meaningful description and understanding of their wedding and their participation and expression within the wedding (O'Reilly, 2005). It was also considered that "most couples remember their wedding well" (Kalmijn, 2004, p. 593) and are therefore able to talk about their wedding in great detail. A main aim of the research was to uncover the language that brides and grooms use to construct their experiences in the context of their white weddings and how this language in turn constructs a meaningful experience of their wedding. Of particular interest was how couples account for the performance of certain wedding practices. From this point SJT was employed as a tool to identify how the accounts of wedding practices serve system justifying functions and thus maintain the status quo. Consequently, locating the study within a social constructionist paradigm was fitting, because social constructionism considers how meaning is created and how it is context dependent. In line with this, discourse analysis was found to be a suitable tool in uncovering the meaning attributed to practices through discourses in their specific context.

## 5.2.1 Qualitative Research

Babbie and Mouton (2005) suggest that "qualitative researchers attempt always to study human action from the perspective of human actors themselves" (p. 270). Related to this simple explanation of qualitative research their emphasis is on describing and

understanding behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). A key aspect in describing and understanding human behaviour is to first listen to and hear the stories that people tell, because this "enables the researcher to gain an understanding of the richness of a personal event and the factors surrounding it" (Jack, 2010, p. 5). Thus, for qualitative research the context in which the research study is positioned is of great importance, because the context of the study gives meaning to the significant events being studied (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Despite the simple explanation given by Babbie and Mouton (2005), according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) qualitative research is difficult to define, because it encompasses a broad range of methods. In qualitative studies the context in which certain phenomena occur is central to the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Once the research context has been located the researcher attempts "to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). In the current research it is necessary to consider the context of patriarchy as a dominant ideology and how this influences and gives meaning to the white wedding and how participants experience and make sense of their wedding (Heise, 2012). At the same time the researcher is required to make sense of the meaning that the participants have ascribed to their white wedding.

In qualitative studies building rapport and gaining the trust of the participants is necessary to receive an honest account of what participants experience (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). From this understanding qualitative studies produce rich data on how participants construct meaning in their social worlds. Interpreting the data is an attempt to answer questions to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem (Jack, 2010; Silverman, 2013). Considering its relevance to this study, qualitative studies also allow researchers to critique and challenge existing social arrangements (Creswell, 2008). Because a facet of qualitative designs is to study and understand phenomena, such as behaviours and attitudes regarding events (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), a qualitative research design has been identified as most appropriate to answer the

questions of why and how women encourage their own subordination through their white wedding.

## 5.2.2 Social Constructionism

Social constructionist researchers, according to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006), "are interested in ways in which talk is used to manufacture experiences, feelings, meanings, and other social facts in the first place" (p. 328). The 'manufacturing' of experiences, feelings and meanings through discourse was particularly central to this research study, whereby the participants' discourses reflect their subjective realities. From a social constructionist perspective it is also necessary for the researcher to consider their own social construction of reality and the role of reflexivity in the research (Hook, 2004). It is understood that reality is socially constructed, as much as social roles are constructed (Kiguwa, 2004). For this research study the social constructionist perspective was imperative in understanding how brides and grooms construct their social identities as brides and grooms and how they construct their wedding through the discourses that the couples are exposed to and use. Subsequently the taken-for-granted roles of the bride and groom, and the wedding itself, are deconstructed (Wilbraham, 2004).

A social constructionist paradigm maintains that "knowledge is *constructed, deconstructed* and *reconstructed* through ideological discourse" (Kiguwa, 2004, p. 306; emphasis in original). Consequently, according to social constructionism language constructs the social world; therefore, discovering how meaning is created in the social world through discourse is important (Kvale, 1996). Discourse does not only describe reality, it also constructs it (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Interestingly, the reality that is constructed is limited to the discourses available to those constructing this reality (Parker, 1992; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). At the same time the discourses that participants

use and are exposed to are indexical and must be considered in the context in which they function (Wilbraham, 2004). This research, for example, considers the context of the white wedding and the influence of patriarchal ideology on the wedding, while maintaining that even patriarchy and the white wedding are social constructions. Similarly, the context of the interview itself is considered to be influential in the discourses that are produced. Lastly, a social constructionist researcher must consider reflexivity and their subjective influence on the research (Parker, 2005). By considering their reflexive position in the research study the researcher reflects on their own history and how this may influence the findings of the research. These reflexive accounts by the researcher are found in chapter 2, the Reflexive Preface and chapter 10, the Reflexive Epilogue.

### 5.2.3 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a postmodern analytic tool that functions to explore how individuals and groups create meaning through the language they use and are exposed to (Schiffrin, 1987). A variety of approaches to discourse analysis exist which serve to fulfil various aims. For the purpose of this research three different types of discourse analyses outlined by Hodges, Kuper and Reeves (2008) will be considered here, as the variation between each type is distinct, easily distinguishable and provides an overview of the broader field of discourse analysis. From this overview an appreciation for why Parker's (2005) approach to discourse analytic reading was used in this research comes to the fore. For Hodges, Kuper and Reeves (2008) the first cluster of discourse analysis is *formal linguistic discourse analysis*. This style of discourse analysis is used in the field of sociolinguistics, whereby the analysis focuses on the "linguistic, grammatical, and semantic uses and meanings of text" (Hodges et al., 2008, p. 571). This form of analysis applies a structural analysis of the text and is thus more descriptive and less critical (Hodges, Kuper & Reeves, 2008).

Second, *empirical discourse analysis*, which is also somewhat descriptive with a move towards a more applied and critical function of discourse analysis considers how language is influential in constructing social practices through interaction (Hodges et al., 2008). This orientation to discourse analysis is also referred to as conversation analysis and studies how individuals may use and apply language (Hodges et al., 2008).

Third, *critical discourse analysis* focuses on a macro level and takes into account "how discourses (in many forms) construct what is possible for individuals and institutions to think and to say" (Hodges et al., 2008, p. 571). From this understanding critical discourse analysis is less descriptive and more applied. Critical discourse analysis is influenced strongly by Foucault who emphasised that "discourse is about the production of knowledge through language" (Hall, 1992, p. 291). This approach to discourse analysis explores social practices critically and considers the influence of constructs, such as power or inequality in social relationships. By taking this into consideration, this orientation presented itself as the most appropriate approach for the purpose of this research, because this research study was guided by the assumption that people use discourse to construct their social worlds and thereby their subjective realities (Shefer, 2004). The discourse analysists role is to uncover how participants represent these subjective realities (Fairclough, 2007).

Parker's (2004) approach to discourse analytic reading is one of a variety of approaches to analysing discourse and was selected for the purpose of this research due to the comprehensive nature of the steps that are followed to identify the discourses within the text as well as the critical approach that is used to analyse the data. Parker (2004), in his approach to discourse analysis, suggests that "discourse analysts study the way texts are constructed, the functions they serve in different contexts and the contradictions

that run through them" (p. 308). It is from this understanding that discourse analysis was used to understand the social realities of the participants through the analysis of texts, because this form of analysis allows for personal experiences and their situation in social contexts to be uncovered (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004). According to Parker (2004) language serves functions and is influenced by ideology, which is evident in this research. For the purpose of this study the focus was to uncover the system-justifying functions of talk and how the discourses that the participants use encourage the subordination of women and prevent social change in terms of gender equality (Parker, 2005).

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) maintain that within discourse analysis the researcher is able to "investigate and analyse power relations in society and to formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities for social change" (p. 2). Within the framework of this research design participants were interviewed using in-depth interviews to gather the data transcripts that were then analysed through Parker's (1994) steps to discourse-analytic reading. The transcripts provided the texts that are intended to represent specific discourses. The data analysis section of this chapter (5.6 Data Analysis) illustrates how the 12 steps to discourse-analytic reading were applied to analyse the interviews (Parker, 2005). A brief example of each of these steps is given with reference to interview 1. Discourse analysis "is the act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 328). Therefore, discourse analysis enables an understanding of how participants reflect on and construct their realities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The participants' discourses will be limited to the discourses that are available to them as part of their social realities (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). For example, in patriarchal society language is "male […] generic" (Kleinman, 2002, p. 299). Terms that are widely used, such as 'manpower', 'mankind' and 'chairman', illustrate that everyday language is male generic. In this research study

certain utterances that are characteristic of weddings, such as 'you may now kiss the bride', 'what God has joined let no man separate', 'who gives this woman to be married to this man?' further suggest the male generic in talk (Austin, 1962). This language illustrates the differentiation between gendered individuals. Through these utterances men are constructed as active and dominant, and women as passive and subordinate. Therefore it is noted that discourses reproduce patriarchy (Speer, 2005). In summary, discourses are identified as originating from the twofold understanding that participants create meaning and that meaning is created for the participants through society's existing language and social interactions (Coyle, 2007). Parker (2005) suggests this when he writes that "we use and are used by language in society" (p. 88).

## 5.3   Sampling Procedure

To begin the sampling procedure certain criteria were set before the participants were recruited (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The criteria consisted of prescriptions for culture (Eurocentric), race (white), socio-economic status (middle-class), sexual orientation (heterosexual) and marital status (newlywed). Further information about the participants' demographics is given in the following section under 5.4 Participants. Word-of-mouth sampling was used to initiate contact with potential participants. The initial contacts were made with acquaintances, previous work colleagues, siblings of friends and extended family of friends. Potential participants were contacted via telephone or e-mail, whereby they were informed of who the researcher was, what the research topic was about and why contact had been set up with them. The initial contacts then rapidly led to purposive snowball sampling (O'Reilly, 2009; Silverman & Marvsati, 2008). Couples that were interviewed eagerly provided contact details of friends for further potential interviewees. It is likely that this indicated that the couples enjoyed speaking about their wedding. Snowball sampling was an ideal sampling method, because this method is somewhat biased and consequently the sought after

demographics were easily found (Henry, 1998). Overall, the obtaining of participants proceeded rapidly, due to the willingness of couples to participate. The brides appeared especially willing to participate, as they eagerly suggested friends that could be interviewed. The contact established with the couple was always done through one person of the couple. From the sample size of ten couples contact was initiated and maintained with seven brides and three grooms.

## 5.4  Participants

The researcher interviewed ten Eurocentric, white, middle-class, heterosexual, newlywed couples. The participants were selected to match the researcher's own demographics. Eurocentric could be considered as having a central focus on European history, tradition and culture. Although aspects of the white wedding are being incorporated in a variety of other cultures (Cheng et al., 2008; Goldstein-Gidoni, 2000; Lee et al., 2011; Ma, 2006; Thulo, 2013), research shows that the white wedding has been and is a predominantly white affair (Ingraham, 1999). This is noticeable with most of the marketing being directed at white couples; one only needs to glance at the white brides on the covers of most South African bridal magazines to notice this. Each couple who participated in the research had recently had a Eurocentric-inspired wedding ceremony, which they were asked to speak about during the interview. The education levels of the participants ranged from secondary to tertiary level education. Research suggests that the extravagance of weddings increases with the increase in socio-economic status (Whyte, 1990), which was moderated by drawing participants from a middle-classed and privileged socio-economic status. Heterosexual participants were chosen as this would provide the gendered interactions between bride and groom that the research study sought to analyse. The ten female and ten male participants were aged between 24 and 40 years, half the participants were cohabiting before marriage and all individuals were marrying for the first time. Although some of the participants

were acquaintances, the researcher did not attend any of the weddings as a guest. Attending some of the weddings as a guest may have biased the findings by preventing the researcher from taking a critical stance for fear of offending the bridal couple. At the time of the interview all participants were residing in either Johannesburg or Pretoria, and all except one couple, namely couple 5, had their weddings in South Africa. The couple who did not have their wedding in South Africa were married in a registry office in the UK. To some extent this couple initially presented as, what Silverman and Marvsati (2008) would refer to as, a "deviant case" (p. 170). This in turn introduced an interesting perspective during the data analysis. However, during the data analysis another couple, namely couple 8, took the place of the deviant case, because of their less traditional wedding and their active pursuit to have a less traditional wedding. The face-to-face interviews with the couples were conducted at the participants' residences. Although half of the participants were not first-language English speakers, all participants were proficient in English. Consequently the interviews were conducted in English. The participants enlightened the interviewer when language or cultural traditions influenced their wedding ceremony. The participants were permitted to withdraw from the interview or study at any point; however, none of the participants opted to withdraw. In three of the interviews the grooms left for 5-20 minutes and then returned to the interview. At these times the grooms indicated that the wedding was more about the bride and, therefore, the bride would be better able to answer questions and talk about the wedding. This reflects societal understandings that weddings are for and about the bride (Carter, 2010). These perspectives were considered during the data analysis of the transcripts.

## 5.5   Data Collection

Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews with the 20 participants; both members of the couple were present. The interview schedule (see Appendix 3) was used

to guide the interview process, which generally lasted 90 minutes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). In-depth interviewing was well suited to discovering the discourses that the participants use to create subjective meaning in their social world (Dunne, 1995; Hook, 2004; Parker, 2004). Non-judgmental, open-ended questions were asked to encourage the participants to speak freely and openly and to discover how women and men construct their experiences of their wedding ceremonies, as well as the roles that they play in these ceremonies. Clarifying questions were asked to understand the meanings of words or phrases used by the participants, as it was not assumed that the researcher and the participants shared the same understanding of the language that was used (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Of particular interest was how couples spoke of, debated and negotiated discrepancies in gender role performances. This could at times be observed in the couples' interactions, whereby they questioned and corrected each other. Similarly, the interviews were viewed as interactions and it is assumed that these interactions also create meaning for the participants (Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Standard orthography, which represents the text as it would appear in written form, was considered most suitable for the transcribing of the interviews, as this made the reading of the transcripts easier and gave the conversation a sense of continuous flow (Kowal & O'Connell, 2004; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). The interviews were transcribed by the researcher, because this allowed for an immersion into the data which may not be present by merely reading the transcripts (Parker, 2005). The benefit of audio recording the interviews and transcribing them is that the interviews could be replayed and reread several times to identify details within the discourse, such as the tone of voice, pauses and the sequence of turn taking (Silverman & Marvsati, 2008). Field notes were made of observations during and after the interview to be used during the data analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Although field notes were taken during the interviews, this was challenging, because it distracted the researcher from listening attentively. Consequently, as the interviews progressed, fewer field notes were taken during the

interviews; instead notes were made after the interview of significant moments and observations in the interview. The field notes included, for example, times when the groom left the interview for a while, or when either of the participants would display a puzzling expression. The field notes in turn formed the initial step for the analysis (Silverman, 2013). The viewing of video recordings and/or photographs of the participants' wedding ceremonies as a form of visual ethnography served as observable data, as well as discussion points for the interview (Aronsson & Gottzén, 2011; O'Reilly, 2009) in which performances of the participants and how they talk about these performances become distinct. The video recordings also allowed the interviewer to observe more spontaneous interactions of the participants on their wedding day (Edwards, 2003).

Each couple provided an average of 5 photographs of their wedding that the researcher was permitted to copy and save electronically. The photographs were selected as data based on the criteria that they indicated gender stereotypical (the bride as gentle and the groom as dominant and protective) or gender deviant behaviour and poses of the couple. Photographs are a performative act and indicate that the bride and groom are motivated to manage the impressions that they portray to others (Goffman, 1959). Wedding photographs appear to communicate a message to one's social and cultural world; they are representations of a peaceful reality rooted in specific contexts and serve to maintain specific social ideologies (Rose, 2004). Although the photographs obtained were not considered as useful data during the write-up of the analysis, they serve as proof that the couples has subscribed to gendered social norms (Strano, 2006).

## 5.6  Data Analysis

Discourse analysis is particularly appropriate as a method of data analysis for this study, because according to Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) language "defines the social

roles that are available to individuals and serves as the primary means through which they enact their identities" (p. 1374). The data analysis of this research intended to answer the questions of *how and why women support existing social arrangements through their white wedding, although these social arrangements are ultimately not in their favour*. The manner in which women and men construct their social roles and identities through discourse has a particular influence on their subordinate or dominant position in society (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). Thus, discourse analysis presented itself as the most suitable method for analysis and was used to analyse the subjective language of the participants and how they use talk and discourses to construct their realities or how their realities are constructed for them through discourse (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Fairclough, 2007).

Discourse analysis considers how language is used to create meaningful identities, relationships and experiences (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Parker (2005) explains that discourse analysis "can be very useful for showing how powerful images of the self and the world circulate in society (and in psychology), and for opening a way to question and resist those images" (p. 88-89). Therefore, through shared understandings of language discourses take on meaning (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). For example, the utterances during a wedding ceremony create meaning for the bride and groom. Similarly, by talking about their wedding the participants created a 'meaning-full' wedding (Austin, 1962). When participants use language that they do not consciously think about they are said to be using discursive repertoires (Roth, 2005). These discursive repertoires were particularly suggestive of the discourses that the participants have been exposed to and continue to use to construct their own experiences. For example, when the groom referred to the bride as a princess on their wedding day he is using discourse that is widely used in society and that may be non-conscious. On the other hand, certain discourses, such as referring to the bride as a princess may also be a conscious approach for the groom to justify his lack of

involvement in the wedding planning. Thus, discourses are constructed through conscious and non-conscious processes (Edwards, 2003).

During the data analysis it was necessary to have a critical view of the discourses. While assuming this critical stance it was essential to focus on the influence ideologies and belief systems had on participants (Fairclough, 2007). To enable this critical approach it was necessary to ask questions about the data, such as how and why the participants defend specific wedding practices that they incorporated in their wedding. Adopting a critical stance comes with its challenges, since the researcher lives within the same broader social context that the participants do and many of the wedding traditions and practices are considered to be the norm (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Thus, critiquing the norms of the participants, which have largely been the norms of the researcher, challenges the taken-for-granted. Indeed, norms are taken-for-granted and to critically question these normative practices brought about defensive responses by the participants. These defensive responses suggest the participants' need to defend, rationalise and justify their actions.

Parker's (1994; 2005) 12 steps to discourse-analytic reading were initially applied rather strictly as a map to analyse the texts produced by the interviews and consequently discover the discourses within the texts. The stages of analysis are briefly described below with an application to interview 1. The full analysis of each interview transcript according to Parker's (2005) discourse-analytic reading is not included in this thesis, as this analysis presented the very early stages of analysing the data and it was considered more appropriate to begin the analysis section (7 Analysis) from the foundation of the already completed discourse-analytic reading according to Parker (2005).

First, the audio recordings of the interview were transcribed verbatim, so that a text in written form could be used for the analysis. Second, a form of free association around

the socially shared material took place. The exploration of socially shared material gives meaning to words and utterances that can be telling of particular discourses. With reference to interview 1 free association involved looking at phases, for example, when the bride said "I was happy to take on the girl roles" (line 1457) and to then consider this phrase as part of the bride's female socialisation. Third, objects (or significant nouns) in the text were identified and their meaning or definition was considered, such as 'tradition' (involves rituals performed as part of one's culture), or 'bride's day' (description of the wedding day being for the bride). This encourages the discourse analyst to consider the meaning and function of taken-for-granted words. Fourth, the way in which the objects relate to the text was considered. For example, 'bride's day' was used by the groom in relation to the bride's centrality in the wedding. Fifth, subjects (or characters) in the text were identified and their roles were considered, such as the groom as a key performer in the wedding who is expected to wait at the altar, say a speech, and so forth. Sixth, it was considered what could be said by the subjects. For example, the groom might say that the wedding is the 'bride's day' and there would be consequences for this utterance, such as less involvement and accountability by the groom in the wedding planning. Seventh, the different versions of the social world that coexist in the text were identified. Considering who holds greater power in the wedding would be important. Eighth, speculations about objections to the text are considered. The discourse analyst explores, for example, what a feminist or homosexual person might say as critique about the heterosexual wedding (Oswald, 2000). Ninth, patterns and contrasts across the text are identified and named. In interview 1 the contrasts between how the bride and groom speak about the wedding are noticeable, such as when the bride explains all the expectations of herself, while the groom had not experienced expectations of himself. Tenth, points where ways of speaking overlap are identified. This similarity in talk is seen in interview 1 when the couple agree about their perceptions of previous weddings they have attended and how this framed how they conducted their own wedding. This overlap in speaking serves to unite the couple. Eleventh, possible audiences of the text are considered, such as family and friends of

the couple who are interested in the couple's experiences of their wedding. By building on the information gathered throughout the abovementioned analytic steps the final step is reached: the discourses that arise through the preceding analysis are labelled. In interview 1 a discourse that arose through the analysis was a 'heteronormative discourse'; this discourse suggested that there were appropriate and prescribed ways in which each gender must perform their role. Not all of the discourses that arose during the analysis were considered as relevant during the write-up of the analysis chapter. Instead those discourses that repeated themselves across interviews were ultimately more reliable as discourses of white weddings and were considered during the data analysis process.

The 12 steps to discourse-analytic reading only presented the initial steps in the analysis process. Once these steps had been carried out with each of the 10 interviews the researcher continued to listen to the recorded interviews several times. During this phase an immersion into SJT took place whereby the theory was applied to the findings of the discourse-analytic reading to make sense of the taken-for-granted discourses. It was considered how the discourses that emerged from the analysis served system justifying and alleviating functions for the brides and grooms. This in turn introduced the write-up of the analysis.

It became noticeable that the couples may use discourses to justify the social system in which they function. This justification could be done through words or actions. Baszanger and Dodier (2004) state that "activities can be read as texts" (p. 15), which illustrates the viable nature of drawing on visual data, such as photographs and video recordings, and employing discourse analysis to analyse these 'texts'. Underlying motivations of why couples chose to film or photograph weddings led to information on how couples chose to view their wedding. Although this was not formally included in the analysis the wedding photographs and video recordings provided interesting points for

discussion during the interviews and allowed the interviewer to question certain traditional wedding practices. Once the interviews had been transcribed and the analysis of the transcripts began the researcher became aware of the disjointed and complex nature the research would adopt by combining a visual ethnographic study with a discourse analysis. The wedding photographs became peripheral to the central aim of the research. Instead, during the data analysis it was decided that the focus of the research would remain on a discourse analysis of the interview texts, which would allow for a more organised, systematic and in-depth analysis of the data. For the purpose of this research the wedding photographs of the participants were thus deemed more useful as prompts during the interview. Nevertheless, the photographs are likely to present valuable data for future research.

## 5.7   Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are key to qualitative research, because abiding by an ethical code ensures that participants are respected, protected and not harmed (Hopf, 2004). Before conducting the research the researcher presented a research proposal within the College of Applied Human Science, after which ethical approval was applied for and granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the letter granting ethical approval to conduct the research).

### 5.7.1   Informed Consent

During the interviews an information and informed consent form (see Appendix 2) was read to the participants, which explained the nature of the research (Silverman & Marvsati, 2008). Informed consent is necessary so that participants are fully aware of what the topic of research is and how participants contribute towards this research

(Fontana & Frey, 2000). The information and consent form was then signed by the participants before the research began. An additional copy of the information and informed consent form containing the researcher and her supervisor's contact details was left with the couple, so that the couple could contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor should they have experienced the interview as infringing on their ethical rights. Although the contact details were provided, none of the participants contacted the researcher or her supervisor.

## 5.7.2  Confidentiality

The participants were informed that confidentiality of the data would be ensured by maintaining the anonymity of the participants through the use of pseudonyms (Boyatzis, 1998). However, during the write-up of the analysis it was decided that participants would be referred to as bride or groom of couple 1, couple 2, and so on. This was considered as less confusing than trying to make sense of and remember 20 pseudonyms while reading the research paper. Distinguishing between bride and groom also served to highlight gender specific aspects in the wedding and wedding planning. If names of family and friends of the participants were mentioned in the interview these were changed to pseudonyms in the transcription.

## 5.7.3  Freedom to Withdraw from the Study

Before conducting the interviews participants were informed that they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any point with no consequences for doing so (see Appendix 2); however, none of the participants withdrew after consenting to participate in the study (Emanuel, Wendler & Grady, 2000; Wassenaar, 2006). Although three of the grooms left the interviews for brief periods of time to attend to certain matters, they all returned to participate in the interview within 5 to 20 minutes.

### 5.7.4 Avoidance of Harm

Harm to the research participants was avoided as best as possible by ensuring that the researcher was respectful and considerate during the interview process (Fontana & Frey, 2000). In the event that the interview process would have raised uncomfortable issues participants would be referred to a psychologist. Although this was planned for, it was not necessary to make any referrals to a psychologist.

### 5.7.5 Reflexivity

The researcher aimed to be impartial during the research, nevertheless, reflexivity is considered to form part of qualitative research (Silverman, 2013). Parker (2005) states that "reflexivity is a way of attending to the institutional location of historical and personal aspects of the research relationship" (p. 25). This suggests that the expectations of the university, the researcher's understandings about her research, her research background and personal relationships influence how the findings are interpreted by the researcher. As a part of being a discourse analysis researcher it is important to examine one's own role in contributing to the discourses (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The researcher's political stance as a feminist influences how the interviews were approached, how and what kinds of questions were asked during the interviews and how the data was analysed. For example, by approaching the research from a feminist perspective the researcher may have focused more on gender unequal interactions rather than other political aspects, such as the heteronormativity of weddings. Furthermore, the reflexive preface (see chapter 2 Reflexive Preface) and the reflexive epilogue (see chapter 10 Reflexive Epilogue) serve to promote understanding of the researcher's positioning in the study. This is important, since the researcher projects themselves onto the research participants (Stacey, 1988).

### 5.7.6   Data Storage and Dissemination

The audio recordings, transcribed interviews, photographs and field notes were stored on a password protected hard drive, which was only accessible to the researcher. The printed transcripts and signed information and informed consent forms were filed and kept in a locked filing cabinet. The data will be deleted or shredded after three years upon completion of the study, unless it presents itself as viable for further research. Participants were informed that they may request a copy of the research findings from the researcher once the study had been completed. The research findings will be available in thesis format from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's library database.

### 5.7.7   Gender of the Researcher

In qualitative research the identity and influence of the interviewer should be acknowledged (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). It should be noted that the interviewer's gender influences how participant and researcher relate to each other (Kohler Riessman, 1987; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Since the interviewer is a woman it may have influenced the information that the participants shared to the extent that the information could have been intended more for a woman listener, that is to say there may have been more of a focus to share information about the more feminine aspects of the wedding, such as the flowers, the dress and decorative pieces (Fontana & Frey, 2000).  Interestingly, it was observed with two couples that when the groom left the interview the bride would change her stance to more liberal and less gender stereotypical views. For example, during the interview with couple 2, while the groom was absent, the bride stated "I'm more the matriarch, I say what goes most of the time" (lines 828-829). By being left alone with the interviewer, the bride may have felt more comfortable in expressing a pro-feminist attitude.

### 5.7.8 Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

Validity, reliability and generalisability take on different meanings in qualitative, compared to quantitative studies (Knoblauch, 2004; Silverman, 2013). In qualitative research validity is the extent to which findings accurately illustrate social reality (Silverman & Marvsati, 2008). The number of interviews conducted assists with the validity of the research. Furthermore, the research findings were compared to previous studies in similar fields (Silverman & Marvsati, 2008). Silverman and Marvsati (2008) explain that "the identification and further analysis of deviant cases can strengthen the validity of research" (p. 268). Thus, deviant cases were included in the analysis, as this presented a contrast to the majority of the findings. Although each couple interviewed had a wedding ceremony, some traditions where consciously omitted by one of the couples.

Reliability in qualitative research represents how consistent the analysis is (Silverman, 2013). Thus, reliability of the research was encouraged by using an interview schedule (see Appendix 3), which ensured that many of the same questions were asked in the interviews. To encourage consistency similar demographics of the participants were maintained during the sampling procedure. Furthermore, using Parker's (2005) 12 steps to discourse-analytic reading with each transcribed interview assisted with the reliability of the study. The 12 steps were applied to each interview in the same manner for analysis (Silverman & Marvsati, 2008). The audio recordings of the interviews were also closely listened to, so that soft utterances and tone of voice would enhance reliability (Silverman, 2013). Validity and reliability was enhanced through creating field notes during and after the interviews and by analysing the transcribed interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

Generalisability in qualitative research is difficult to achieve, due to the smaller sample size (Silverman, 2013). Despite this, it is noted that the participants function within a social system whereby they are exposed to and make use of particular practices and discourses. To some degree these practices and discourses contribute towards the generalisability of the study, because they represent societal traditions and therefore reflect the status quo.

## 5.8  Conclusion

This methodology chapter has outlined the process that was followed in conducting the research. A qualitative study rooted within a social constructionist paradigm appeared to be an ideal research design to identify *how and why women support existing social arrangements through their white wedding, despite these social arrangements ultimately not being in their favour*. The 20 participants were selected via word-of-mouth and snowball sampling based on specific demographics and criteria. The qualitative study made use of discourse analysis to guide the data collection and analysis processes. Discourse analysis served as an analytic tool to understand the language that the participants used to create identities and meaning-full experiences (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Thereafter SJT presented a theoretical lens through which the discourses represented system justifying functions for the brides and grooms. The chapter is concluded with the ethical considerations, which aimed to reduce harm and risk to the participants and formed a cornerstone for the research study.

# 6   Outline of Analysis and Discussion

The two chapters that follow (7 Analysis and 8 Discussion) provide an analysis and discussion of the data. Although the chapters are signposted with individual headings, the analysis chapter is characterised by analyses of excerpts of the transcripts and brief discussions on these excerpts. These discussions were included in the analysis chapter since they were directly related to the preceding analyses and followed coherently from the analysis of each interview extract.

In the first section of the analysis chapter a descriptive account is given of sexist wedding practices that the participants incorporated into their weddings. An explanation is given of how these wedding practices are problematic in that they present a barrier to gender equality. In the second section of the analysis two discourses, namely the bride's day discourse and the fairy-tale wedding discourse, are identified, analysed and discussed. The third section of the analysis provides a deeper analysis and discussion of how the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding enable a system-justifying function. Lastly, the analysis is concluded with a section on the palliative effects of SJT and how these palliative effects are noticeable in various white wedding traditions. It should be noted that some of the extracts of the interviews are repeated throughout the analysis to capture new ideas as well as to extend the analysis.

The discussion chapter provides a summary and expansion of the brief discussions in the analysis chapter, which suggest that the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding encourage system justification and thus gender inequality. At this point the discussion expands on fundamental concepts of SJT introduced in the literature review and considers how women's depressed sense of entitlement, out-group contact and ideological dissonance encourage gender inequality in the context of the white wedding.

The discussion is concluded with the implications of the research study and a contextualisation of this research within South Africa.

# 7  Analysis

## 7.1  An Account of Sexist Wedding Practices

### 7.1.1  Introduction

In the heterosexual white wedding a plethora of sexist traditions and practices are illuminated. During the 10 interviews conducted by the researcher the couples mention a variety of these sexist traditions and practices. For some couples the practices are incorporated to make the wedding more wedding-like, while for other couples certain practices are problematic. Interestingly, some couples persist in incorporating sexist traditions and practices even after they have been identified as problematic for the couple. The sexist wedding practices which the couples talk about in the interviews are mentioned in this section of the analysis. Although labelling the couples' talk and their practices as sexist is not an analysis of the discourses, this section provides an introduction to the following three sections of the analysis.

### 7.1.2  Sexist Wedding Practices

#### 7.1.2.1  Proposal

The gendered traditions and practices of the white wedding begin even before the wedding ceremony with the proposal, which is initiated by the groom (Bambacas, 2002; Schweingruber et al., 2004). The bride in interview 8 says "he had to start the whole thing off by proposing […] I don't think I would have proposed, because that's what the guy does" (lines 795-797). While referring to the proposal the groom says "we had to start from that traditional point of view to get the ball rolling" (lines 514-515). Although couple 8 had a less traditional wedding, whereby they omitted certain traditions such as the bride walking down the aisle, they were adamant about keeping the tradition of the proposal. Similarly, couple 3 admits to variations in traditions during their wedding, but

they maintain the proposal. The groom says "we went out to find a venue and then only three four months after did I actually propose to her" (lines 1051-1053). The bride later adds "ah, yes, in that sense I'm very traditional, you need to ask me, ja, and the engagement was beautiful" (lines 1060-1061). It is evident that to get married the man needs to initiate a marriage proposal that must then be accepted by the woman (Schweingruber et al., 2004). Except one couple who was interviewed, all couples initiated a marriage with the man proposing marriage to the woman. The proposal is made with a ring, which is then worn by the bride to indicate that she is no longer available to marry other men (Geller, 2001). Therefore the ring is a public and symbolic display to show that the couple is engaged (Schweingruber et al., 2004). Tradition also prescribes that the engagement ring, which supposedly indicates female worth, should cost at least two to three months of the groom's salary (Ingraham, 1999; Yalom, 2001). Contrasted to the woman's role in the engagement the man is not required to wear an engagement ring (Benshea & Benshea, 2005).

### 7.1.2.2 Planning

From this point, once the proposal has been accepted by the woman, the bride engages in the wedding planning process (Bambacas, 2002). Perhaps this echoes Dixon and Wetherell's (2004) research whereby they note that "women in heterosexual relationships continue to bear more responsibility than their male partners for routine domestic tasks" (p. 167). Similarly, the wedding planning can be considered a domestic responsibility, whereby wedding work includes "decorating, making meal choices, shopping and coordinating family schedules" (Sniezek, 2005, p. 216). The bride in interview 10 says "honestly it is the woman's work, like really, yoh, you can't ask him to do some of the things, because it's just the lady's, I mean men are really not interested in flowers and decorations, he didn't know half of what the place was going to look like" (lines 193-197). She later adds "but men, they don't realise how much there is, because we [women] just take it upon ourselves, to us it's normal, just to, a hell of a lot" (lines

257-259). This bride distinguishes between the different roles that women and men take on during the wedding planning, whereby the woman does most of the planning and the man remains largely disengaged. In the same interview the groom defends his lack of planning by saying "we [the men] can't do any of the stuff, because if we do it they [the women] still don't like it" (lines 201-202). When asked if he would have liked to be more involved the groom states "uh, I don't know, it's, like I said it's *her* big day" (line 270). By saying that the wedding is "*her* big day" (line 270), the groom takes the responsibility for the planning away from himself and emphasises that the wedding is for and about the bride (Beach & Metzger, 1997). This explanation in turn serves to justify and account for the groom's lack of involvement.

In interview 1 the bride says "I sort of just took on the role [of planning], because it was just practical. […] So I think we just took on the roles that I think we knew we could do" (lines 1270-1273). The bride says "I do think there is…automatic roles that women do tend to take" (lines 1487-1488). This perhaps suggests that socialisation plays a part in determining the gendered roles that the bride and groom take on. The performance of these roles is considered to be automatic and consequently these roles are what women and men will be competent at during their wedding planning (Butler, 1988; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). She later adds why she did not expect the groom to plan the wedding, she says "like, because I think it was too girly, you know, why would he want to do the napkin rings, why would he want to plan the confetti?" (lines 1436-1437). With the bride doing the planning and then justifying why she did this it becomes noticeable that she has a greater investment in the wedding (Bambacas, 2002). Contrasted to the bride's great investment and involvement in the wedding planning, the groom's behaviour is characterised by a lack of involvement, similar to that of the behaviour of the groom in interview 10.

The bride in interview 7 mentions "[he] said he'll just leave that [the planning] over to me" (line 141). The groom agrees and says "as long as it's *her* beautiful day" (line 145). Couple 7 also assume clearly defined gender roles and maintain these during the planning. They distinguish between the smaller tasks of the bride and the greater tasks of the groom and seem to indicate with this differentiation that the groom's tasks were of greater importance. The groom mentions "while she [the bride] was doing all the shopping and picking out of small stuff I then had time to make sure I get stuff like the accommodation, the honeymoon all of that sorted" (lines 170-172). The groom later mentions "I sorted out all the big finance stuff" (lines 858-859). Even the bride admits "all the small details of the tables that was my job" (line 864). It becomes evident that the couple performed different roles and these roles are also evaluated differently with the bride's tasks receiving a lesser status by both the bride and the groom (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004).

In interview 5 the groom absolved himself completely from planning the wedding and when asked how much planning it took he says "nothing for me […] I left it over to you organising it, it was already done" (lines 179-180). The groom is minimally involved in the planning of the ceremony. He appears blasé about his lack of involvement in the planning and instead seems more proud about not organising the wedding. The groom later honestly admits "if she didn't start planning the wedding it probably wouldn't have happened" (lines 580-582). Although the wedding planning is a taxing task for the bride, there is no noticeable objection to the woman performing this task. The bride in this interview supports the groom's lack of involvement when, while speaking about the planning, she says "I think that is traditionally more a woman's thing" (lines 606-607). The suggestion of gender stereotyped roles with wedding work being a "woman's thing" (line 607) validates the unequal distribution of wedding work (Jost & Kay, 2005).

Similar to the groom in interview 5, while speaking about the wedding planning the groom in interview 4 mentions "ja, sort of, I left the decorations and things to her" (lines 148-149) and "it was pretty relaxed, I tried to stay as little involved as I could" (line 172). The groom makes a concerted effort to not be involved in the wedding planning and leaves this up to the bride. The bride explains that she was setting up the venue with her sister and mother the evening before the wedding. She says "we finished like at 12 o'clock at night" (line 10). It becomes clear that the bride's role was to plan and set up the wedding. Both the bride and groom aim to uphold these roles. The bride does so by planning the wedding, while the groom disengages from the wedding planning by "chilling" (line 161). The distribution of work during the planning is evidently unequal, yet the couple maintains these fixed roles throughout the wedding planning process.

Couple 6 plan their wedding in a different fashion. Interestingly, the bride was minimally involved due to a busy work schedule. In response to this the groom planned most of the wedding. However, the groom is still aware that the wedding is more for and about the bride. He says "I think traditionally, it's more like it's the bride's day and everything and I said from the start look it's what you want, but I'm happy to assist and help wherever I can" (lines 77-79). When speaking about the planning he adds "I mean it's traditionally not a man type of thing to do" (line 97). The groom recognises that he was functioning outside a groom's traditional role by actively engaging in the wedding planning. The groom's needs are clearly distinguished as secondary to the bride's needs, yet the groom still plans a wedding that is less in favour of what he wants and in line with what the bride wants.

### 7.1.2.3  Attire

Certain gender distinctions become noticeable during the planning of the couple's attire. The groom is generally uninformed regarding the bride's dress, yet the bride is

often involved in arranging the groom's outfit. The bride in interview 1 explains that she oversaw the groom's fitting of the kilt, which was his wedding outfit, she says "a week before the wedding I took it out the cupboard to see if it still fitted him" (lines 957-958). She also arranged dress fittings for the groomsmen. In contrast the element of surprise about the bride's dress creates suspense and allows the bride to be awed by the groom and the guests on the wedding day. The bride in interview 6 says "no, you didn't see my dress at all" (line 666), to which the groom replies "I said 'you'll look beautiful in anything', because you just don't go there [all laugh] from a man's point of view" (lines 667-668). He later adds "I couldn't help you go pick out a dress" (line 1031). It is self-evident that the bride would know what the groom wears, but not vice versa. The groom indicates that it is taboo to comment on the bride's dress or to help her choose a dress. Similar to the groom in interview 6, when the groom in interview 10 was asked if he was actively engaged in choosing the bride's outfit he says "no, I didn't know what she was wearing" (line 324). In interview 3 the bride explains something unusual, she says "[he] even went with the first time when I went to look for a dress, so he had, I asked, his input was also valued for the dress […] The only thing where he wasn't involved with, at the last moment was the final dress, because I wanted to keep that a surprise for him" (lines 244-245, 247-248). Although a slight deviation is made by this couple, the final bridal gown was only seen by the groom on the wedding day. The tradition of keeping the bride's dress a mystery and surprise for the groom was followed by 8 of the 10 couples and seemed to enhance the splendour of the bride on the wedding day.

The outfits themselves are distinctly different for the bride and groom. Eight of the grooms interviewed wore a suit, while two grooms wore a kilt for cultural reasons. Nine of the brides that were interviewed wore a pale-coloured dress or skirt, most with high-heels, which seems to also restrict the bride's movement (Bartky, 1990). One of the brides wore an ombre style dress whereby beige faded into grey. Although these types of outfits appear to be natural for brides and grooms to wear to their wedding, the

outfits contribute towards the couple performing their gender in a specific manner (Butler, 1988; Montemurro, 2005). A white wedding dress, which was worn by eight of the ten brides, is intended to represent the bride's purity, innocence and virginity (Sweetser, 2000). According to this understanding the bride is traditionally required to display her sexual status in her attire, which is not required of the groom.

### 7.1.2.4 The Bride being walked down the Aisle

The wedding day itself is characterised by various sexist traditions and practices. On the wedding day the bride is walked down the aisle by her father to the groom (Geller, 2001). This is done in keeping with the historical tradition that the bride initially belongs to her father and once married belongs to her groom (Benshea & Benshea, 2005). In interview 7 the bride explains "I think it's a dad's privilege of walking his daughter down the aisle to pass his authority over to the husband" (lines 618-620). This statement indicates that the bride views herself with paternalism as a possession to be passed from father to husband (Glick & Fiske, 1997). She seems to advocate and justify the transference of authority over her and takes pride in doing so (Jost, 1995), while also emphasising that her father is privileged to pass his daughter to the groom. The groom supports this when he says "yes, I think there's a beautiful, what do you call it, symbolic gesture of the dad saying 'listen, she was under my wing up to now, I trust you enough to give my daughter up to you now' so that's the one thing at every wedding that I actually enjoy" (lines 621-624). The couple acknowledge and appreciate that it is the father and then the groom that hold the authority over the bride. By describing the act of being passed from man to man in benevolent terms, the act is not seen as unequal, but rather justified as a gracious gesture (Jost & Kay, 2005). The groom's paternalistic chivalry masks this unequal and sexist practice as a "beautiful […] symbolic gesture" (line 621) (Viki et al., 2003).

The bride in interview 1 admits that she has a strained relationship with her father, yet it was still her father who walked her down the aisle. She explains "it was just I think, it was just to have a special little moment with my dad as well" (lines 1042-1044). Although the bride has a better relationship with her mother she maintains the tradition of having her father walk her down the aisle. The bride in interview 10 explains why this tradition is performed by saying "your dad gives you away to your husband, um, he gives you away to your husband for everybody to see" (lines 372-373). This suggests that the bride is publicly handled like a possession being passed from one man to another. The problem of the bride being objectified in full view of public gaze is overlooked.

### 7.1.2.5  Speech

Later on in the wedding celebrations, during the reception, the groom gives a speech. The grooms in interviews 2 and 10 both mention that although they were nervous and did not want to give a speech there was an expectation for them to give a speech. In these situations the grooms conformed to this tradition and explained to the interviewer that the groom had to give a speech and thereby fulfil certain expectations. The groom in interview 10 justifies his giving a speech by saying "because I, you have to say a speech I think, you obviously have to thank [her] parents and my parents and [her]" (lines 112-113). The bride reinforces this statement by saying "and it's traditional for the groom to do the speech" (line 114). It seems that it is self-evident, taken-for-granted, traditional and expected that the groom would give a speech. Although it becomes clear that the groom was highly anxious about giving a speech, the traditional expectation that the groom *must* give a speech outweighs the groom's own need not to give a speech. However, the same traditional practice of giving a speech does not apply to the bride.

When the groom in interview 2 is asked by the interviewer if he wanted to give a speech, he says "I didn't" (line 247). In response the bride remarks "maybe…you didn't want to, but you had to" (line 248). This indicates that the groom giving a speech is expected not only by others, such as family and friends, but also by the bride. He responds "I was just nervous that I was going to say it right and then what to write as well" (lines 266-267). There is pressure to say what is considered as 'right'. He discloses that he searched the internet as to what he should say in his speech. He then asked his mother to read over the speech, perhaps this was a way to supervise that he would be saying what was 'right'. When asked why the couple had speeches at their wedding the groom replies "it was almost like that's just what you do at a wedding. That's why we did it" (lines 318-319). The groom later adds "it's almost like there was…steps for our wedding that you had to do, so we pretty much did it […] it was just from everyone's input […] we just followed it" (lines 517, 518, 520 & 522). Merging the traditional steps that the couple believes they must follow helps to create this scripted wedding experience and ensures that the couple fulfils expectations.

Contrasted to the groom, when asked why the bride in interview 2 did not give a speech at the wedding she replies "I've never really known brides to do speeches really" (line 237). The groom agrees and says "yes, I've never heard a bride say a speech" (line 238). The couple continues by stating that this was not expected of them (lines 241-244):

241    Groom:    But on both families, no one ever said it once that she should say a
242              speech.
243    Bride:    Yeah, no one ever mentioned, you know, 'you should say a
244              couple of words', so it never actually came to mind.

When asked why the groom gave a speech the bride explains "as of today you now become [his] wife and I'm under his wing now if that makes sense" (lines 664-666). The bride views the groom as protective and perhaps herself needing his protection. It

becomes clear from couple 2 and 10 that it is expected that the groom must make a speech, but this expectation does not apply to the bride. Both the bride and the groom are aware that their gender enables different roles for each of them.

There are also specific expectations about the content of the groom's speech. When the groom in interview 3 was asked what he said in his speech he replied "haven't got the faintest, I said whatever is right" (line 576). Similar to the groom in interview 2's understanding of the speech, this shows that the groom believes that there is a right and a wrong way of giving a speech. By saying that he "said whatever is right" (line 576) he indicates that he met expectations. After the groom recites his speech for the interviewer, the sentimentality of the speech is noted when the bride responds "I was just enthralled and listening and almost in tears, that ahhhh I married the right guy, it was just so sweet and I know that he means every word" (lines 611-613).

Interestingly, the bride in interview 9 gave a speech on the wedding day. She stepped out of her expected female role and mentions "um, even I said a few words" (lines 717-718). This indicates that it is unusual for the bride to give a speech and that she broke this gendered expectation of her. Nevertheless, despite giving her own speech she says "I gave [him] a list, I made him a list of…these are all the people you need to thank" (lines 746-747). The bride prescribes for the groom what he must say in his speech, yet it is not considered that she would thank the people mentioned on the list in her speech. Thus gender differences in the content of speeches are noticeable.

### 7.1.2.6 Bouquet and Garter

During the wedding celebrations specific traditions, such as the throwing of the garter and the bouquet, that reinforce gender roles and the heterosexual marriage are often performed (Bambacas, 2002). In interview 6 the bride explains why they chose not to

throw the garter and the bouquet, she says "because I hated every wedding I had to be at before when I was still single and you had to stand with all the other people and then try and catch the bouquet, it just felt very, something, a tradition we did not like and I'm not sure if he felt the same thing about the garter, we just thought it doesn't add anything" (lines 1002-1006). The bride emphasises the embarrassing and patronising nature of these traditions, whereby a person who is single is encouraged to marry, as if their singleness where deficient (Braithwaite, 1995; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). This couple is able to deconstruct this traditional wedding practice, decide that it adds no value to their wedding and consider an alternative. In response they omit this practice entirely.

Couple 9 also explains why they broke away from some traditions. The bride says "We didn't throw the flowers or the garter. […] Because we just thought it was a silly tradition, we thought we'd actually passed the age where we want [him] crawling up my dress and taking out my garter" (lines, 441, 443-445). The couple identifies this tradition as problematic for them and choose to omit it from their wedding. Although these gender specific practices are problematic for some couples they are often still incorporated in the wedding. While referring to the practices of throwing the garter and the bouquet, the bride in interview 7 mentions that this was part of the scripted wedding traditions. She says "it's nothing that stood out for me like the rest of the wedding it was just another it was just something I had to go through, in a good way, not forced to do it, it's just next thing on the list tick" (line 588-590). The script that the bride follows and alludes to indicates that there are listed practices that should be performed to make a wedding a wedding.

### 7.1.2.7   Changing Surnames

As part of getting married it is traditional that women change their surnames to their husband's surname (Goldin & Shim, 2004). This practice indicates that both individuals

are from the same family unit and it is in keeping with historical practices that point out that the wife is now under her husband's authority (Yalom, 2001). The bride in interview 6 says "I've always said that I've wanted to marry a guy with a shorter surname [all laugh] and get rid of my long surname. And it's something that I didn't, he gave me the option, he said I didn't have to change I could double-barrel, but I'm not precious, I wasn't very precious about it" (lines 1109-1113). The groom gives the bride the option to double-barrel their surnames, whereas this is not presented to the groom or considered by the groom as an option for himself. These discrepancies are not noted by the couple. The humorous comment made by the bride about wanting a "shorter surname" (line 1110) serves to accept, rather than challenge, this patriarchal practice (Macpherson, 2008).

When the couple in interview 9 was asked why the bride double-barrelled her surname, the groom explains "it's a compromise" (line 935). Although the groom says this, it is clear that it was not a compromise, because the groom did not change his surname at all; however, he perceives it to be a compromise, because it is traditionally accepted in the context of South Africa that the bride will change her surname. The bride explains why she did not completely adopt the groom's surname, mentioning a PhD degree and publications as a reason. It appears that the bride must justify her decision, yet this is not necessary for the groom. This is also noticeable in the following dialogue in interview 9 (lines 950-956):

| 950 | Groom: | But, ja, it just simply never occurred |
| 951 | | to me and yet it wasn't a problem, I wasn't insistent that [she] had to |
| 952 | | change her name, it wasn't an issue, I understood um the reasons |
| 953 | | behind it and I was quite happy…um…it was a compromise |
| 954 | Bride: | But I always wanted to, I could have just retained my surname, but I |
| 955 | | always wanted to somehow have his surname so that was the decision |
| 956 | | and also I like his surname |

The thought of the groom changing his surname never occurs as a possibility to the couple and so it is taken-for-granted that the groom would retain his surname, while the bride changes her surname to a double-barrelled surname. It is evident that the brides in interviews 6 and 9 both express a desire to change their surname and, thus, construct themselves as active and willing participants in this gender unequal practice. Both brides mention the thought-through nature of this decision when they say "I've always said" (interview 6, lines 1109-1110) and "I always wanted to" (interview 9, line 954). This resonates with the extract from The Marriage Meander Company (n.d.) in the literature review, which suggests that women aspire to change their surnames.

Couple 7 was asked why only the bride changed her surname to which she replied "Ach, no, it's just to me it's important to become one with a new family, again it's not sentimental, but traditional, a bit sentimental that whole thing of um, um it's important for me to also show that I'm accepting um [him] as my authority" (lines 822-825). The bride acknowledges the husband's authority over her and changes her surname as an indication of her submission to him. The gender differences with the bride changing her surname and the groom retaining his are legitimised and possibly suggest the incompleteness of a woman before marriage (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Contrasted to all the brides that were interviewed, the bride in interview 8 kept her surname. The groom says "[she] decided to keep her surname, she did ask me if I was ok with it and I did say I am" (lines 630-631). Although the bride goes against the norm of changing her surname to the groom's surname, she still asks for approval from the groom. The groom in turn consents to this. The bride later adds "I said to [him] if we have kids I'll change my name, because otherwise with kids it gets a bit complicated" (lines 642-643). Although the bride did not change her surname, and thus challenges the status quo, it appears that she is not completely resistant to the idea of changing her

surname in the future. The gender unequal nature of even this practice becomes evident, because it is not both the bride and groom who consider changing their surname when they have children, but rather just the bride.

### 7.1.3  The Problematic

The abovementioned gender specific traditions and practices hint at gender inequality and sexism within the wedding. Although the distribution of labour during the wedding planning seems to be strongly gendered with the bride doing most of the planning, most couples maintain this gendered distribution of wedding work (Currie, 1993; Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). However, the groom in interview 9 indicates that even though he contributed towards paying for the wedding there were certain things he could not decide on. He says "there were a few things that I was permitted to choose, even though I had to pay" (lines 281-282). A desire to be more involved in the planning is noticeable, yet the groom withdraws himself from talking about the more feminine aspects of the wedding when he says to the bride "you'll have to talk more when it comes to all the flower stuff" (lines 385-386). The groom admits that his opinions are overlooked during the planning, but he indicates an awareness of gender roles and that as a man he should be less involved in this and consequently allows the bride to speak about the flowers. This suggests that perceptions of masculinity are influential in determining how involved men might be during the wedding planning (Lindegger & Quayle, 2009). Interestingly, throughout the interviews there is an indication that the wedding is the 'bride's day'. Despite referring to the wedding as the 'bride's day', which suggests that the wedding is in her honour, the bride takes on most of the responsibilities and is expected to engage in the planning for 'her day'.

The stereotypical gender roles continue with the bride being walked down the aisle by her father to be given from one man to another. The couple in interview 4 is unable to

think of an alternative way for the bride to enter the chapel. The bride says "well somehow I would have to get in there [laughs]" (line 336) and the groom admits "I don't think we know it any other way" (line 339). Interestingly, the groom notices something he did not realise before. He says, reflecting on the bride being walked down the aisle by her father, "don't you think it's kind of sexist giving ownership away, like selling a vehicle" (lines 342-343). The groom recognises the benevolently sexist nature of a traditional and accepted act in the wedding ceremony. This is a new and troubling revelation for the couple, but despite this revelation they are unable to consider an alternative to this act. The lack of familiar alternatives to traditional wedding practices ensures that couples continue performing traditions that make less sense to them when these traditions are deconstructed.

The distinct gender roles are clearly present when the interviewer asks about the changing of surnames. It is common practice for women in South Africa and many other countries to change their surnames, while this is not expected of men (Fox, 2010; Golding & Shim, 2004). In interview 4 when explaining that the bride changed her surname to the groom's surname, the groom says "ja, it's all about ownership" (line 364). This reiterates his earlier comment that giving the bride away is a sexist practice, because it resembles the act of selling a vehicle. The groom identifies the problem with this practice: when changing her surname the bride indicates that she belongs or is owned by a specific person, yet the couple choose to keep it as it is. It appears that the couple does not know of alternatives to the practice of changing surnames.

The couple in interview 8 discuss the changing of surnames. The bride retained her surname and says "ja, I actually, I am, I feel I do have to defend my decision, which I think is a bit frustrating, because why do I have to change my name why can't he change his name? It's still a very male dominated thing, which irritates me a bit" (lines 646-649). The groom responds "and that's why I feel bad, because everyone who we explain it to doesn't accept it, um, like some of my friends said 'well, if she was marrying me I would

make her change it'" (lines 650-652). The groom's friends openly exhibit intentions of hostile sexism in declaring that they would "make" (line 652) their partner change her surname (Glick & Fiske, 1997). The couple is troubled by the idea that a woman would be made to change her surname. The bride recognises inconsistencies in the expectations of women and men and declares her irritation of this. Both the bride and the groom identify that their decision has not been accepted by others and consequently they must defend their actions against backlash around people who criticise this decision.

When couple 10 was asked if either of them changed their surname the bride mentions that she did and says "it was tough for me to give up my surname" (line 467). The bride alludes to an attachment to her maiden name and the sacrifice of giving this surname up and instead taking on the groom's surname. Here it is noticeable that the surname is part of the bride's identity, yet she still changes her surname. The groom in turn responds in a serious tone "I didn't ask her, I told her" (line 473). The groom is prescriptive towards the bride and her having to change her surname. Despite the bride finding it difficult to change her surname there are no possible alternatives to this practice for either of them.

Although the gendered and sexist practices in the white wedding are identified as problematic above, these practices are perpetuated and encouraged by women, who are seemingly most disadvantaged by them. For example, by changing their surname it is suggested that women now belong to another person; however, as noted above, despite the concept of ownership, women are far more likely to change their surname after marriage than men are (Fox, 2010). Consequently, if women as subordinates are encouraging their own disadvantage and subordination through gender unequal wedding practices, the possibility of empowerment and gender equality is far less likely to occur.

### 7.1.4 Conclusion

The lack of options or alternatives to specific wedding traditions ensures that the couples meet expectations, even if this is not consciously their intention. When speaking about gender specific traditions some couples identify the troubling nature of sexist practices that make the wedding a wedding, whereby men benefit more than women (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). The bride's greater involvement in the wedding planning and the bride being walked down the aisle by her father to be given to the groom are indicative of such gender specific and sexist wedding practices. Ultimately, the rituals surrounding the heterosexual wedding serve to perpetuate sexist gender roles and traditions (Strano, 2006).

However troubling the sexist practices may seem to the couples, most couples continue to incorporate these traditions in their wedding and even continue to justify these sexist practices. A variety of questions arise when considering these sexist practices: how do some couples manage to break away from these traditional and sexist expectations, while others are not able to? How is it possible for a couple to dismiss some sexist practices, but not others? Why are sexist practices justified, even when the inequality is blatant? Perhaps the groom in interview 4 recognises an influential factor of the status quo when he says "it's sort of like keeping to the norms, to society's norms, otherwise people look at you funny" (lines 334-335).

## 7.2 Discourses of the Bride's Day and the Fairy-Tale Wedding

### 7.2.1 Introduction

'The bride's day'…'her day'… it has not been explicitly stated, but one is aware that the topic here is a wedding. The wedding is being referred to with reference to a woman, which leads one to believe that the bride is central to the wedding (Monger, 2004). By speaking about the wedding as 'the bride's day' one's perceptions of the wedding and for whom the wedding exists comes to the fore (Bambacas, 2002). This taken-for-granted discourse of the bride's day is repeated in most of the interviews and can be flattering for the bride. Certain discourses, such as the bride's day discourse, also validate and allow power dynamics to exist (Parker, 1992). This is particularly noticeable when the division of labour during the wedding planning is analysed. A further discourse that arises and is rooted in the bride's day discourse is the fairy-tale wedding discourse, which also serves to legitimise power relations. The aim of this chapter is to illustrate through a discourse analysis of interview extracts how the couples negotiate, justify and make sense of their ideas on the wedding planning and what 'the bride's day' and 'fairy-tale wedding' mean to them (Willig, 1995).

### 7.2.2 Discourses of the Bride's Day and the Fairy-Tale Wedding

The centrality of the bride in the wedding is noticeable in the following extract of interview 10. The wedding planning is being discussed and after the bride elaborately explains how much of the planning she did the groom is asked by the interviewer if he would have liked to be more involved in the wedding planning process.

Extract 1, Interview 10, Lines 268-311
268     Interviewer: [to the groom] Ok, would you have liked to be more involved in the
269                      planning?

| 270 | Groom: | Uh, I don't know, it's, like I said it's her big day |
| 271 | Bride: | But it mustn't just go about me |
| 272 | Groom: | Yeah, obviously, but I'm saying it's like you want to make her happy |
| 273 | | and it's what she wants um like a lot of people said it's her big day, you |
| 274 | | know like make it as special as you can for her as well as much as for |
| 275 | | myself, but I mean like if she wants it like that and that and that and I |
| 276 | | don't like it |
| 277 | Bride: | If he didn't like it he would say |
| 278 | Groom: | I would just fit into everything like the pastel colours, that was also |
| 279 | | very nice |
| 280 | Bride: | And if I told him everyone must wear pink he would say no and I |
| 281 | | would accept it, I wouldn't just do everything even if he doesn't like it, |
| 282 | | there's always a choice |
| 283 | Groom: | I mean like, we obviously spoke about things, like if I said like |
| 284 | Bride: | If I'd tell you I like that colour suit, you'd say absolutely not and I |
| 285 | | would be fine with it |
| 286 | Groom: | And then like, I said to her she chose all her colours and the suit I've |
| 287 | | always liked was a baby blue with a waistcoat and a scrunch-y tie and |
| 288 | | then like now after she saw it she said it looked very nice, so I mean |
| 289 | | that's what I wanted |
| 290 | Bride: | And at first I said "no, I don't want that, I don't want that" and he did |
| 291 | | it and it's not like, I said "fine, if that's what you want then do it" I would |
| 292 | | have chosen something else, but that's what he wanted and it's |
| 293 | | compromise all the time |
| 294 | Groom: | Like I said to her I really like that colour, I've always wanted if I was |
| 295 | | going to get married, like my uncle also he was also like a baby blue-ish |
| 296 | | with those scrunch-y, but he had the penguin tale with top hats, but I |
| 297 | | wasn't… this looked very nice when they took their stuff off |
| 298 | Interviewer: | Ok, ok, I'm still going to get back to the dress and the suit, um, did |

| 299 | | you [to groom] feel excluded when people were saying "it's *her* day"? |
|-----|--------|----|
| 300 | Groom: | No, no, no, I was also big it's… obviously it's my big day too, but it's |
| 301 | | more for her, you know it's like, when you're a little girl you the fairy-tale |
| 302 | | and you wake up and when |
| 303 | Bride: | I didn't think of it like that [in background] |
| 304 | Groom: | You see her little niece said "she's a princess, she's a princess" so now when |
| 305 | | she grows up she'll remember how when it's her time for that wedding |
| 306 | | she'll also want to be like "she's a princess", like Barbies have their little |
| 307 | | wedding thing. Her dad spoke to me before and I like realised a lot from |
| 308 | | that, he said like ever since she was a little girl princesses and that that |
| 309 | | was like it's a big day for them, so obviously like a big day for me, but |
| 310 | Bride: | I think you wanted it to be a fairy-tale, because you wanted it to be for |
| 311 | | me. I didn't even know you thought like that, but that's cool |

The distribution of labour during the wedding planning was skewed with the bride completing most of the tasks. It is, however, not unusual for brides to complete most of the wedding planning, but rather the norm (Bambacas, 2002). When asked by the interviewer if the groom would have liked to be more involved in the wedding planning the groom avoids a direct answer, but explains that it is the bride's big day. He positions himself neutrally and avoids saying something that may be open to critique when he says "I don't know" (line 270) (Beach & Metzger, 1997). By putting forth that the wedding is the bride's big day he is justifying why he was not more involved in the wedding planning and is indirectly stating that he would not have liked to be more involved. The bride argues that the wedding should not just be about her; however, the groom emphasises that he wanted to make her happy and that her father had also said that it was "her big day" (line 273). The bride interjects that the groom would say if he was not happy with something, yet the groom says that he would just adjust to her plans. There is a strong contestation about whose will prevails, while simultaneously caring for each other's interest. The concept of the wedding being the 'bride's day' is

used to portray the bride as having authority and the groom as yielding to her interests. The wedding is strongly biased towards the bride with both the bride and groom encouraging this.

The couple then gives examples of how their decision making was in fact less biased. They explain that the groom's choice in the colour scheme of the décor and the groom's outfit was also considered and that the bride "would accept it" (line 281). The groom mentions that he chose his own suit, although the bride initially did not want him to wear that particular suit. She then agreed to the suit and explains that it was "compromise all the time" (line 293). However, although the bride's understanding is that consenting to the groom's suit is a compromise, later on in the interview it becomes known that the groom was unaware of the bride's wedding outfit. This implies that the bride's opinions hold more weight in terms of the decision making during the wedding planning. The groom acknowledges this when he says "obviously it's my big day too, but it's more for her" (lines 300-301). He contributes to making the wedding day about her and yields to what he believes are the bride's interests. He describes how the bride's niece viewed the bride as a princess and how this is formative in the niece's development, since she will want to be the princess, like the bride, at her own wedding. He continues to account for his lack of involvement and makes a case by saying that Barbies also have wedding dolls and wedding props. By making a reference to a stereotypically female toy the groom is linking the wedding to the bride's childhood. He is placing an emphasis on how significant the wedding is for the bride, since he assumes that she has had wedding fantasies since childhood. Explaining these interactions distinguishes the bride's desires from those of the groom (Chodorow, 2012). The groom continues with his case when he tells of a conversation that he had with the bride's father, who highlights the importance of the wedding day for his daughter. The father's words serve to oversee and police the groom's actions and ensure that the groom will do whatever will make the bride happy on *her* wedding day (Foucault, 1979).

At some point while the groom is building his argument as to why the wedding was more the bride's day rather than *his* day or *their* day the bride interrupts. The groom is busy explaining that little girls have fairy-tale ideas about their wedding when the bride says "I didn't think that" (line 303). This comment seems to fall into the background, receives no acknowledgement and the groom continues to establish his case by making reference to personal and relevant examples of why the wedding is the bride's day and therefore why it was virtuous of the groom not to be involved in the wedding planning. In contrast to what the groom says the bride denies an attachment to a fairy-tale wedding, but does not want to undermine the virtue of the groom. The bride's comment is unusual, as it is commonly believed that all women want a fairy-tale wedding (Geller, 2001; Heise, 2012). The personal accounts of the groom build a stronger case for him (Edwards, 2013), especially by making reference to what a significant person in the bride's life, namely her father, has said. It is difficult to refute the groom's personal account, because he does not intend for the story to be factual. Elsewhere the bride mentions "my dad's the most special man in my life" (line 375). Consequently the bride would be less likely to disagree with what this special person has supposedly said to the groom. The bride concludes the extract by suggesting that the groom considerately wanted the wedding to be a fairy-tale for the bride. This serves to cement the groom's intentions as virtuous, kind and self-less. Initially the bride expresses frustration and criticism about the groom's lack of involvement; she says "I would have liked him to do more" (line 255-256). However, the bride also wanted her ideas, for example regarding the groom's outfit, to prevail, which would be more difficult if the groom had been more involved. While expressing some frustration she is also defending against the idea that she selfishly dominated the wedding planning.

The bride's expression of frustration about the groom's lack of involvement leads the interviewer to question the groom about whether or not he wanted to be more involved in the wedding planning. The bride's initial frustrations are forgotten or covered up at the end of the extract when the focus has been shifted to the bride and the wedding

being her day. The groom's lack of involvement is then instead viewed benevolently and favourably. By viewing the groom's intentions benevolently the groom's lack of involvement no longer seems unjust (Fiske et al., 1999). Similar to a fairy-tale, the groom, through the transformation of his supposed intentions, is transformed into a charming and chivalrous prince (De La Harpe, 2010).

The expectations that lead to the formation of the fairy-tale wedding are noticed when earlier on in the same interview couple 10 speak about the speeches at the reception. The extract below portrays how the groom in interview 10 was worried about his speech, because he did not want to do anything "wrong" (line 97). The sense of pressure he experiences influences his nervousness and in turn the time he spent on preparing for his speech.

Extract 2, Interview 10, Lines 91-97

| 91 | Bride: | You were more worried about the speech than everything else, than |
| 92 | | getting married [laughs] |
| 93 | Groom: | Like [my friend] and I sat for like 4 hours just writing the speech, he was |
| 94 | | my best man, he's from [place]. But like I mean when you wake up your |
| 95 | | mind just starts running, because you know this is the day and she has |
| 96 | | been talking about it for so long and also she wants to make it a |
| 97 | | fairy-tale and you don't want to do anything wrong |

Similar to the previous extract here the notion of the fairy-tale wedding is used by the groom to portray himself favourably. The talk about a fairy-tale wedding focuses on the groom rather than the bride. In the extract the bride mentions how worried the groom was about preparing and giving his speech and recalls how he was even more worried about this than actually getting married. Furthermore, the groom mentions spending many hours with his best man writing the speech. He remembers his nervousness about not wanting "to do anything wrong" (line 97), because the bride has placed great

importance on the wedding day. He points out that the fairy-tale wedding is more for the bride by explaining how he did not want to ruin this for the bride. The groom is alluding to the pressure and expectations that were placed on him. He suggests that the bride wants their wedding to be a fairy-tale and since fairy-tales have happy endings for the princess (or in this instance the bride) the groom realises that he cannot make what he perceives as a mistake, which would ruin the fairy-tale. Later, the interviewer asks the bride if the wedding really was a fairy-tale for her to which she replies "ja, for sure" (line 165). Here the idea of the wedding being a fairy-tale seems to be incredibly influential in determining how the bride and groom do their wedding. Unlike 'real' fairy-tales that supposedly come naturally and easily creating the fairy-tale wedding places a great deal of pressure on the couple to produce something 'unreal'.

While *doing* their wedding couple 4 took a similar approach to couple 10 with the bride taking on a central role during the planning. Extract 3 is about the bride and groom discussing how they went about the final preparations for their wedding. The notion of a "dream wedding" (line 180) emerges and the couple's contrasting views on this come to the fore. Interestingly, differences in the bride's perceptions of the wedding, to those of the bride in extract 1, are noted.

Extract 3, Interview 4, Lines 140-186

| 140 | Interviewer: | Ok, ok, ok, then speaking of the families, were they involved with the |
| 141 | | planning? |
| 142 | Bride: | Ja, we tried to like involve everyone, we went with our parents to |
| 143 | | look at the venue, to look for venues and I mean his mom did the |
| 144 | | flowers and the cake, so we were pretty involved with them, she was |
| 145 | | just asking me how I wanted the cake and the flowers. And then with |
| 146 | | my mom as well, we went to look at the venues and my sister and my |
| 147 | | mom helped me set up, ja |
| 148 | Groom: | You guys did a lot of the shopping for the decorations. Ja, sort of, I |

| 149 | | left the decorations and things to her |
|---|---|---|
| 150 | Bride: | Ja, but you also came with me once to China mall |
| 151 | Groom: | I did, ja, but I sort of left it to your |
| 152 | Bride: | At the end, ja, to set up, yes [all laugh] |
| 153 | Interviewer: | Tell me about that, what happened? |
| 154 | Groom: | Ehhh, I think the night before, I can't remember |
| 155 | Bride: | Because we were trying to figure out with the venue when we could |
| 156 | | go and set up and the woman was saying in the morning and I was |
| 157 | | saying it would be too hectic in the morning to set up, go do the make- |
| 158 | | up, the nails and everything and then so I asked can't we go the night |
| 159 | | before and then she's like yes, so I just went with my sister. What were |
| 160 | | you doing? |
| 161 | Groom: | [laughs] Chilling. I was chilling |
| 162 | Bride: | You were also with my dad, weren't you? |
| 163 | Groom: | I was probably with my cousin |
| 164 | Bride: | I don't know, because like some of his family came over, his uncle |
| 165 | | and his cousins, so ja, we just went. We thought it won't take that long |
| 166 | | [laughs], but then there was something that we had overlooked, well I |
| 167 | | had overlooked, because I didn't realise that there was a screen right |
| 168 | | behind where we were going to sit, like a T.V. screen, so I didn't think of |
| 169 | | how we were going to cover that up [laughs] so that took a while, then |
| 170 | | my sister ended up figuring it out how to do that with the material that |
| 171 | | we had |
| 172 | Groom: | It was pretty relaxed, I tried to stay as little involved as I could |
| 173 | Interviewer: | Why that? |
| 174 | Groom: | I don't know, like every girl has a dream of her wedding and stuff, for |
| 175 | | me it doesn't really matter, for me the day is just about getting married |
| 176 | | and sharing that experience with friends and family, I'm not too worried about |
| 177 | | if it's this place or that place. Like I did help you choose some stuff, but |

| 178 | | the choices I didn't put a lot of thought in |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 179 | Interviewer: | And how was that for you [to the bride], was it like planning your dream? |
| 180 | Bride: | I never really had a dream wedding [laughs]. I never really, I wasn't |
| 181 | | the type that thought, ah, when I get married I want this and I want |
| 182 | | that, no, it just was like, ok, look for ideas and get some ideas. I mean I |
| 183 | | did the decorations for my sister and my brother's wedding as well |
| 184 | | [laughs] so it was just decorating, ja, I just wanted something simple and |
| 185 | | for it to look okay, so, we didn't really have anything in mind, like we |
| 186 | | had this dream it would be like this [laughs] |

The bride responds to the interviewer's question about whether family was involved with the wedding planning. She explains that the couple's parents were involved in choosing a venue. In line 142 the bride considerately says "we tried to involve everyone", whereby she indicates that the wedding planning was a communal matter and not selfishly possessed by the couple. The mention of the involvement of the bride's mother-in-law, her mother and her sister suggests that women were predominantly involved in the wedding planning, which is rather common (Geller, 2001). The bride refers to her mother-in-law when she says "she was just asking me how I wanted the cake and the flowers" (lines 144-145). Although it was the groom's mother who organised the cake and the flowers, she consults with the bride as to how the bride wanted the cake and flowers done. The bride's role as protagonist in the wedding becomes evident. The groom shows his support for the bride's lead role when he says "ja, sort of, I left the decorations and things to her" (lines 148-149). In response the bride insists that the groom was more helpful than he states. She says "ja, but you also came with me once to China mall" (line 150). After this back and forth negotiation of how involved the groom was in the wedding planning the groom and bride both admit that the bride did in fact do more of the planning and preparing for the wedding. The bride, the groom and the interviewer all laugh about this comment (line 152). They are humoured by the obvious disparity that the groom was less involved, while the bride

was rushing to do the final decorations. The idea of the fairy-tale wedding resolves the tension between the bride stating the groom helped and then that he did not help. If the couple applies the fairy-tale wedding concept then it is considerate for the groom to be less involved and to allow the bride to take over.

The bride goes into details about how the final decorations were done. She illustrates the stressful nature of the last minute decorating by saying "it would be too hectic in the morning to set up" (line 157) and that it "took a while" (line 169). Contrasted to the time constraints that the bride experienced, the groom explains that the wedding planning and final preparations were not stressful for him. He says "I was just chilling" (line 161) and "it was pretty relaxed, I tried to stay as little involved as I could" (line 172). As with extract 1 the differences in the distribution of labour between the bride and groom are profoundly obvious with the bride taking on far more of the tasks during the wedding planning. The compliance of the bride and groom with stereotypical gender roles helps to account for and resolve the tension of the differences in the division of labour (Cikara et al., 2009). In lines 166-167 the bride even corrects herself by saying that it was not them who had overlooked the inconveniently placed T.V. screen, but rather *her*. By saying this, the bride is illustrating her agency and responsibility in the planning and execution of the tasks in preparation for the wedding.

When asked about why he tried to be as little involved as he could the groom explains that the details of the wedding were less important to him than to the bride. He elaborates what he means by this when he says "I don't know, like every girl has a dream of her wedding" (line 174), whereas this was not the case for the groom. His insufficient knowledge claim of "I don't know" (line 174) allays expectations and serves to position himself as impartial in this process (Beach & Metzger, 1997). The groom is then able to avoid an unfavourable evaluation. The groom is also drawing on social narratives of gender and the wedding (Butler, 2004; Geller, 2001). By mentioning how details of the wedding did not matter to him the groom is justifying why he was not

involved in the final wedding preparations. He gives a noble and benevolent reason for his lack of involvement, which centres on the importance of "getting married and sharing that experience with friends and family" (lines 175-176). His benevolence conceals a lack of interest in the wedding planning.

The interviewer checks in with the bride and asks if she experienced the wedding planning as planning a dream. The bride replies "I never really had a dream wedding [laughs]. I never really, I wasn't the type that thought, ah, when I get married I want this and I want that" (lines 180-182). The bride has differing ideas about their wedding than what the groom expects and believes her to have. The bride's explanation deviates from the general expectation that women dream about and have fairy-tale fantasies of their wedding from childhood (Geller, 2001). She resists the idea that she would follow the script of the fairy-tale wedding, yet the allocation of tasks is such that the bride is able to plan the wedding that she wants.

To some extent the couple complies with gender stereotypes, for example the bride doing all of the final wedding decorations without the groom (Diamond, 2000). She is agentic in this and both the bride and groom are in agreement that decorating is the bride's task, despite the noticeable differences in the division in labour. However, the bride also deviates from gender stereotypical expectations when she mentions that she did not have a dream wedding idea. The groom has a strongly stereotyped understanding of what he believes the bride wants; this in turn assists in accounting for his disengagement during the final phases of the wedding planning, because, as he explains it, the details of the wedding, such as the venue, do not matter to him. The groom is more concerned with "getting married and sharing that experience with friends and family" (lines 175-176), which in turn serves to justify why he was not involved in decorating the venue. The groom contrasts his desires to those of the bride, whereby his desires are focused on what is supposedly truly important. This emphasises the idea that the wedding is a female fantasy and that the groom allows the bride to

indulge in this, while he focuses on the important matters. This is also noted in the extract below.

Similar to the brides in the abovementioned extracts the bride of interview 1 (extract 4) was also the primary planner of the wedding day. The bride and groom identify this and elaborate on how they make sense of the variances in the distribution of labour. In the extract below, as the interview reaches its end, the couple is asked rather generally if they have any final comments about gender specific issues that formed part of the wedding planning.

Extract 4, Interview 1, Lines 1426-1469

| | | |
|------|-------------|---|
| 1426 | Interviewer: | Is there anything else that you can think of, um, perhaps any specific |
| 1427 | | gender issues that were part of your wedding or of the planning of the |
| 1428 | | wedding? Where you thought, ah, I had to do that, because I'm a |
| 1429 | | woman, because I'm a man, or I didn't get to do that, because I'm a |
| 1430 | | woman, because I'm a man, any specific gender issues, anything else… |
| 1431 | Groom: | I got to wear a dress. I'm sorry this is serious [laughs] |
| 1432 | Bride: | I think maybe, thinking about it now I probably took on a lot of the |
| 1433 | | roles, maybe because I am a woman and I decided that…not he wouldn't |
| 1434 | | be able to do it or he wouldn't be competent in doing it, but maybe that |
| 1435 | | I just thought that it wasn't fair for him to do it or didn't expect for you |
| 1436 | | to do it. Like, because I did think it was too girly, you know, why would |
| 1437 | | he want to do the napkin rings, why would he want to plan the confetti |
| 1438 | | or… |
| 1439 | Groom: | She gave me the easy things like the menu that I can do |
| 1440 | Bride: | You know…maybe…I don't know. |
| 1441 | Groom: | But I feel the same way, maybe this is clichéd, but I feel that the |
| 1442 | | actual wedding, when I talk about the whole ceremony and the planning |
| 1443 | | and how it looks and how it feels and all that sort of stuff generally from |

| 1444 | | what I can feel is it's, it's the girl's fantasy and everyone talks about "it's |
|---|---|---|
| 1445 | | the bride's day" and the groom just happens to be there. Whereas with |
| 1446 | | us, we did a lot of planning together, in fact far more discussion and talk, |
| 1447 | | do this and how do we hold the little card up with the battle names, so I |
| 1448 | | think in that way were a little bit more involved in that, but I think a lot |
| 1449 | | of the actual hard graft would be left to you, [friend] and your sister and your |
| 1450 | | mom and it seemed like the girls wanted to get together and have an |
| 1451 | | excuse for a coffee and make this look like chaos. |
| 1452 | Bride: | But I also knew, you're not going to want to sit there with a piece of |
| 1453 | | glue and a piece of ribbon putting it around on the card, so I wasn't |
| 1454 | | going to ask you to do it. |
| 1455 | Groom: | I was organising lights when the power went out and I was sitting |
| 1456 | | there with little ribbons, so there was more of a… |
| 1457 | Bride: | We were, I was happy to take on the girl roles. |
| 1458 | Interviewer: | Ok. |
| 1459 | Groom: | I wouldn't have minded, but they just seemed happy to get on with it |
| 1460 | | and you had your friends over from the UK and all that sort of stuff. |
| 1461 | | Give them some time together and I concentrate on servicing the |
| 1462 | | bakkie [laughs]. I don't think it's a bad thing, but it just seemed to work |
| 1463 | | out that way. If circumstances had been where it was just her and I here |
| 1464 | | we probably would have you know both stuck in and got it done and |
| 1465 | | sorted, but the fact we had family from the UK that we don't see often, |
| 1466 | | friends from the UK that we don't see often, you know, family up from |
| 1467 | | Cape Town, that we don't see often, it's a good chance for everyone to |
| 1468 | | get together and get involved. You gave me the back door on the odd |
| 1469 | | occasion [laughs]. |

The groom initiates the response by referring to his kilt. He states that he was permitted to wear a "dress" (line 1431). He invokes humour, but rapidly returns to the question by

acknowledging that the interview is serious. By making use of humour and by laughing the groom makes light of the question and laughs off gender roles. He indicates his unease with the question and the possible implication the answer may have for him (Macpherson, 2008). The bride mentions that she took on more of the roles during the wedding planning and justifies this by saying that she thought the tasks were more "girly" (line 1457). While outlining that it is not that she believes the groom to be incompetent, she makes use of a way to refute that she is prejudiced about men's capabilities. The reasoning that "I just thought that it wasn't fair for him to do it or didn't expect for you to do it" (lines 1435-1436) brings to the fore the bride's agency and responsibility for maintaining the stereotypical gender roles, as well as her understanding of justice and what she believes to be fair. She shows care for the groom in the context of the interview. The variance in the distribution of labour between the bride and the groom is explained as "fair" (line 1435) by the bride when she makes use of a reference to gender (Bambacas, 2002). Instead she would feel guilty if the groom had to do some of the wedding preparations. The rhetorical questions about napkin rings and confetti in lines 1436-1437 further serve to justify why the bride took on more of the stereotypically woman's roles. This persuasive rhetorical questioning also assists in explaining the division of labour in terms of natural gendered preferences and serves to alleviate discomfort with regards to these differences in the division of labour (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009).

The justification of the many roles that the bride took on serves to normalise the unequal distribution of labour between the bride and the groom (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). The groom acknowledges the bride's reasoning by adding that he was *given* the "easy" (line 1439) tasks to do. This points towards the groom's incompetence and the bride's agency and implies that the bride was in control of and responsible for the wedding planning. When she says "you know…maybe…I don't know" (line 1440) the bride's hesitation and the uncertainty in her talk suggest that she is grappling with the

dilemma experienced with regards to the discrepancy in the role allocations (Beach & Metzger, 1997).

An explanation is then given by the groom as to why the bride and groom had differing roles during the wedding planning. He says "it's the girl's fantasy and everyone talks about 'it's the bride's day' and the groom just happens to be there" (lines 1444-1445). The groom admits that this might be a "clichéd" (line 1441) view, yet his explanation serves to justify the aforementioned differences in labour distribution: because the wedding is considered to be the 'bride's day' the bride may have the wedding done in the manner that she would like; however, the planning will also need to be the brides responsibility. The groom's statement emphasises the centrality of the bride in the wedding (Bambacas, 2002). The major and the minor roles on the wedding day of the bride and the groom respectively are used as an explanation of the major and minor roles taken up by the bride and groom during the wedding planning.

A sudden change in position is noted when the groom then says "whereas with us, we did a lot of planning together" (lines 1445-1446). He counters any insinuations that he may be subscribing to stereotypically gendered behaviour by explaining that they "did a lot of the planning together" (line 1446). With this explanation the couple distances themselves from other couples, who are supposedly less gender equal than they are. Therefore, although the distribution of wedding labour between the bride and groom was not equal, it was apparently more equal than how other couples would supposedly allocate tasks during their wedding planning. He then undoes some of his justification when he admits that the "actual hard graft" (line 1449) was done by the bride, her friend, her sister and her mother. The groom vacillates between identifying that the wedding is more for the bride, that the wedding was planned by both the bride and groom and that the hard work was done by the bride. The vacillation means that the groom is not accountable for any one position and therefore he cannot be taken as having been uninvolved or overinvolved in the wedding planning. With his threefold

explanation he positions himself in a protected and safe space where he is not responsible for any outcome. He adds "it seemed like the girls wanted to get together and have an excuse for a coffee and make this look like chaos" (lines 1450-1451). By providing a benevolent explanation of what the groom believes the bride wanted to do, the groom's lack of involvement in the wedding planning is less prominent, justified and even seems considerate (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Similarly, in lines 1452-1454, the bride's explanations "but I also knew" and "so I wasn't going to ask you to do it" substantiate her decisions regarding the role allocations during the wedding planning. The explanations oppose and neutralise the groom's reasoning that the bride wanted an "excuse for a coffee" (line 1451), while also emphasising that she is considerate in how she allocates tasks. In response the groom defends his position and input by mentioning his contribution of organising lights and holding ribbons (lines 1455-1456). The bride's agency and choice are noted when she explains "I was happy to take on the girl roles" (line 1457) (Geller, 2001).

The groom then persuasively justifies his minimal involvement when he refers to the wedding planning and states "I wouldn't have minded, but they just seemed happy to get on with it" (line 1459). He indicates with his ambivalence that it is the decision of the bride and her being happy to do the tasks that resulted in him being less involved in the wedding planning (Glick & Fiske, 2001). By mentioning the bride's friends from the UK, the groom further justifies why he was not as involved as the bride. Consideration for the groom is evoked when he says he gave the bride and her friends "some time together" (line 1461). The groom's masculinity is reinforced when he explains that this then allowed him to "concentrate on servicing the bakkie [laughs]" (lines 1461-1462). By reinforcing his masculinity the groom also alludes to appropriate gender roles and that he accurately subscribed to these roles (Glick & Fiske, 1997). He laughs after commenting on "servicing the bakkie" (lines 1461-1462) suggesting that he acknowledges that he is making use of a sexist and strongly stereotyped comment to

explain his behaviour. He then defends against this in a serious tone of voice by saying "I don't think it's a bad thing, but it just seemed to work out that way" (lines 1462-1463). The groom then again justifies why the planning was done in that particular way, he explains "it's a good chance for everyone to get together and get involved" (lines 1467-1468). Through the use of the subject "everyone" (line 1467) the groom refers to the guests from near and far, and not himself, as he has already withdrawn himself to the task of "servicing the bakkie" (lines 1461-1462).

As a final comment in this extract the groom says "you gave me the back door on the odd occasion" (lines 1468-1469) and then laughs about this. This statement points towards the agency of the bride and her control in the wedding planning. The groom is accepting of this and is humoured that the bride wanted less of his involvement. This justifies and places in a positive light the discrepancies in the distribution of labour, by rendering the groom as passive in the wedding planning process.

The research participants are not always aware of the discrepancies in the distribution of labour. Couple 7, for example, speak about the tasks completed in an interesting manner. They quantify each of their tasks in the extracts below.

Extract 5a, Interview 7, Lines 170-172

170    Groom:    And the nice thing, while she was doing all the shopping and picking

171              out of small stuff I then had time to make sure I get stuff like the

172              accommodation the honeymoon all of that sorted

In extract 5a the groom explains that he was responsible for the honeymoon and the accommodation, while the bride was responsible for the "shopping and picking out of small stuff" (lines 170-171). He differentiates between the tasks that they took on during the planning and places an emphasis on the importance of his tasks by referring

to the bride's tasks as small. The differentiation is emphasised by both the bride and groom later on in the interview, which is seen in the following extract.

Extract 5b, Interview 7, Lines 856-869

| 856 | Bride: | From my side that was quite important, like he did the honeymoon |
| 857 | | and I did the wedding |
| 858 | Groom: | And I think it's slightly also a gender thing, I sorted out all the big |
| 859 | | finance stuff paying the deposit for the venue, paying the photographer, |
| 860 | | partly due to my job being in finance and accounting so it's natural for |
| 861 | | me to then make payments and invoices and stuff. It just felt natural for |
| 862 | | me to sort out all that big finance admin stuff |
| 863 | Bride: | The biggest thing that was important to both of us was the venue and |
| 864 | | the food all the small details of the tables that was my job um |
| 865 | Groom: | And making sure there's service providers, I basically made, got the DJ and |
| 866 | | the photographer, after we picked who to get I mean I then made the |
| 867 | | payments |
| 868 | Bride: | That's not because it's gender specific, that's just the way it works for |
| 869 | | us |

The labour during the wedding is quantified by the couple, whereby the groom's tasks are described as "big" (line 862), while the bride's tasks are referred to as "small" (line 864). The groom's reasoning as to why he dealt with the big financial matters is that he is an accountant and therefore those tasks are more familiar to him. The differentiation of tasks into categories of big and small suggests that the bigger tasks were more important or of greater value. However, throughout the interview the couple states how the bride did more of the planning and was therefore significantly busier than the groom. The language used here divides the tasks into categories of big and small. The differentiation of tasks based on size brings about a power dynamic. In simple terms,

the person (groom) who completes the big tasks is powerful, while the person (bride) who completes the small tasks is less powerful or even powerless (Parker, 1992).

The groom begins by explaining that the division of labour during the wedding planning is somewhat gender related. He minimises this influence by saying "*slightly* also a gender thing" (line 858) [emphasis added]. The bride's opinion differs from what the groom says, when she later explains "that's not because it's gender specific, that's just the way it works for us" (lines 868-869). She is accounting for the differences in labour between her and the groom and she explains that the division in labour is not due to specific gender factors, but rather that these differences occur naturally. In contrast, according to Butler (2004) gender is created through gender performance, thus gender and gender roles cannot be natural, but are instead a product of socialisation. Similarly, De Beauvoir (1972) states that a woman is not born a woman, instead she becomes a woman through the process of socialisation. This controversially suggests that a woman does not inherently have desires and ambitions about being a princess-like bride in a fairy-tale wedding, but rather that these desires arise through a process of socialisation. As such the wedding itself is a social construction and thus represents a performance by actors. The wedding script, as with a gender script, is performed to the point where it appears natural (Butler, 1988).

In the extracts above a picture is painted of how these couples negotiate the various tasks that make-up the wedding planning. A clear distinction is prevalent with the bride being engaged in most of the planning, decision making and delegating. The agency of the brides is obvious when the grooms speak about how they were permitted to make some decisions. In comparison to the brides the grooms are far more passive in the wedding planning, pointing out to the interviewer that wedding planning is not a masculine endeavour (Geller, 2001). At times there are wavering opinions with regards to whether or not the groom was involved and helpful or uninvolved and unhelpful. The fairy-tale discourse alleviates any negative tension of the groom's possible

disengagement, because it allows the bride to be in control and indulge in her fairy-tale wedding fantasy.

Couple 6 is contrasted to all other couples that were interviewed, because the groom completed most of the wedding planning for practical reasons. The couple acknowledges that this is unusual and explains how they negotiated this deviation from the norm.

Extract 6, Interview 6, Lines 66-100

| 66 | Bride: | I think another piece of |
|---|---|---|
| 67 | | information that's worthwhile to know is that I travel a lot for work and |
| 68 | | therefore was not around for a lot of the wedding planning, [he] was |
| 69 | | very involved |
| 70 | Interviewer: | Ok |
| 71 | Groom: | Yes, I did a lot of planning, the e-mailing |
| 72 | Bride: | And I also don't like to phone people I don't know for quotes, for |
| 73 | | some reason I just don't like doing it, [he] was happy doing it and all the |
| 74 | | people say shouldn't the bride be doing stuff like that? I'm like no, we're |
| 75 | | fine to do it |
| 76 | Interviewer: | How was that? Shouldn't a bride supposed to be doing that? |
| 77 | Groom: | I think traditionally, it's more like it's the bride's day and everything |
| 78 | | and I said from the start look it's what you want, but I'm happy to assist |
| 79 | | and help wherever I can, so because of her hectic schedule I said ok |
| 80 | | what's your idea of a church or a venue or like we had obviously access |
| 81 | | to a lot of books from friends and websites and so on so we kind of had |
| 82 | | a wedding pinpointed with whatever we wanted we had a visual idea of |
| 83 | | what it was so it was easy from there to find certain service providers |
| 84 | | and churches and so forth. I had a list of churches or venues or |
| 85 | | whatever or service providers and then I'd contact them and then from |

| 86 | | there get their quotes and filter back |
|----|----|----|
| 87 | Bride: | And then a short list and we then decided |
| 88 | Groom: | So we'd start big and then narrow it down to what everybody had |
| 89 | | and we'd have informal chats and then from there kind |
| 90 | Bride: | For example we decided that we wanted Proteas as our wedding |
| 91 | | flowers and everything was planned around that until we realised it's |
| 92 | | not the right time of the year and then [he] would just start phoning |
| 93 | | florists and farms and places in the Cape area to see where he could find |
| 94 | | Proteas just because that is what we had decided. You were really good |
| 95 | | at doing stuff like that, dealing with vendors, just because it's not my |
| 96 | | strong point and I also wasn't around that much, so |
| 97 | Groom: | I didn't mind. I mean it's traditionally not a man type of thing to do, |
| 98 | | but I didn't mind, my job has a lot of management and a lot of |
| 99 | | coordination, so I could kind of fill that role contact people and see |
| 100 | | where we were going |

When asked about their wedding planning the bride sets the scene by explaining that she often travels for work and was therefore unable to coordinate much of the wedding planning. She mentions that she was questioned about this, whereby it was suggested that the wedding planning was the bride's role. She accounts for their wedding planning by saying they were "fine to do it" (line 75) together. The groom adds to this explanation by stating that traditionally the wedding is the "bride's day" (line 77). He mentions how he complied with these traditional expectations and understandings of the wedding and aimed to plan the wedding in the manner in which the bride wanted it done. This is reiterated when he explains "I said from the start look it's what you want, but I'm happy to assist and help wherever I can" (lines 78-79). The groom considerately makes a concession to assist with the wedding planning. Since it is acknowledged that this is an unusual task for the groom, he is viewed in a favourable light. Although the groom plans most of the wedding, it is done in a fashion that fulfils the bride's desires.

The groom acts as a helper to the bride, who is the main character of the wedding (Bambacas, 2002). In lines 94-95 the bride expresses her appreciation for the groom's organisational input. She acknowledges how he made the effort to organise flowers that were not in season. This emphasises how strongly the groom aimed to fulfil the bride's wishes.

The groom also identifies that planning the wedding is generally not done by men and that he is acting outside the expectations of his gender role (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). He says "I mean it's traditionally not a man type of thing to do, but I didn't mind" (lines 97-98). To eliminate perceived negative intentions he grants a concession by engaging in the wedding planning and therefore appears considerate (Jackman & Muha, 1984). To some degree the couple is flexible and act outside of stereotypical gender roles, whereby the bride would plan the wedding; however, in line with these stereotypical gender roles the bride's wishes are still paramount in planning the wedding (Bambacas, 2002).

All of the abovementioned couples are eager to create a fairy-tale wedding, which is planned to the smallest detail. In extract 7 couple 5 present themselves as an outlier to the fairy-tale planners. The extract begins with the bride explaining the background to the wedding. The couple was pregnant at the time of planning their wedding and were due to emigrate from the UK to South Africa. They were also the only interviewed couple who had their wedding outside of South Africa. The couple then starts by discussing their wedding as a "heavily practical arrangement" (line 236), which they contrast to a romantic fairy-tale type of wedding.

Extract 7, Interview 5, Lines 217-265

217    Bride:        So that was one of the

218                   things on my list, is it feasible, can we get married, what do we have to

219                   do, so I phoned up, spoke with somebody, found out where and when

| 220 | | and how to organise it and how much it cost and it turned out that we |
|---|---|---|
| 221 | | had to go and book an appointment to get registered, then they check |
| 222 | | your background and do a preliminary check I suppose and that you are |
| 223 | | genuinely wanting to get married, you're not trying to get… Because |
| 224 | | he's a foreign national, trying to get him into… There was |
| 225 | | misinformation, because actually you had a German passport, so it |
| 226 | | wasn't so much of a problem, um, so I thought let's just go straight from |
| 227 | | the airport, get that done, then we had 16 days and then we could get |
| 228 | | married, um |
| 229 | Groom: | And the time with the baby in between |
| 230 | Bride: | I know what the difference was, because you had been living in the |
| 231 | | UK, so it was alright and that was the confusion, whether you had an |
| 232 | | English address, utility bills, so that was ok from the UK bank account. |
| 233 | | It's more for if your partner is based overseas and then they are coming |
| 234 | | to marry in the UK, because obviously there are issues with people |
| 235 | | wanting to come and live and people marrying for money, I guess. But |
| 236 | | you can kind of feel, it was a heavily practical arrangement really, it |
| 237 | | wasn't that fairy-tale, romantic |
| 238 | Interviewer: | Tell me about that: fairy-tale, romantic kind of thing |
| 239 | Groom: | It wasn't what you see in the movies with the big |
| 240 | Bride: | I guess |
| 241 | Groom: | I think a lot of women, a lot of girls, that's what they |
| 242 | Bride: | You grow up dreaming about getting married |
| 243 | Groom: | Fairy-tale wedding |
| 244 | Bride: | It's like kind of the big ceremony |
| 245 | Groom: | Event |
| 246 | Bride: | Event in your life |
| 247 | Groom: | And after that life's over |
| 248 | Bride: | Not necessarily |

| 249 | Groom: | I'm joking, in some women. I've had it at work now people's children, |
| 250 | | like we had one woman her daughter had this massive wedding |
| 251 | Bride: | Thousands and thousands |
| 252 | Groom: | And they spent. And I think it didn't even last four months and then, |
| 253 | | and then the next one again. They just come back from one of those… |
| 254 | | It's funny, I think some women are serial brides, they think it's their |
| 255 | | fantasy, and once it's finished, a few years later, they think, or a few |
| 256 | | months later they get divorced and next wedding. I think it can become |
| 257 | | an addiction |
| 258 | Bride: | Yeah, I'm sure that's true, because that's fantasy and reality isn't it. |
| 259 | | Fantasy is often nicer than reality |
| 260 | Groom: | A lot of my cousins are divorced now, they all had massive weddings, |
| 261 | | man, I think that's a big let-down of modern society, people have |
| 262 | | cottoned onto it, especially in the UK. In the UK they had this thing of |
| 263 | | this massive splash out on weddings putting people hugely in debt, and |
| 264 | | that causes people then, that causes massive problems and the |
| 265 | | relationship… |

The bride explains the practicalities of the couple getting married. She goes into detail about legalities concerning her marriage with the groom. She mentions that he is a foreign national and how this affects getting married to a national in the UK. The bride is using this as an introduction to set the background as to why the couple had the wedding that they had. Since the wedding deviated somewhat from the fairy-tale type of wedding the bride provides an explanation as to why this was the case (Fox, 2010). This leads on to the bride mentioning that the wedding was a "heavily practical arrangement really, it wasn't that fairy-tale, romantic" (lines 236-237). She is also accounting for why the wedding was not a fairy-tale, romantic wedding by explaining the practical tasks involved in getting married. When the interviewer probes into a fairy-tale, romantic wedding the couple explains that there is a notion that a wedding is a

great event that women "grow up dreaming about" (line 242). This notion is similar to the ideas expressed in extracts 1 and 3, which imply that women have been dreaming about a fairy-tale, romantic type of wedding since childhood.

The groom goes into detail about children of colleagues who had large and expensive weddings and shortly afterwards they divorced only to have their next big wedding. He calls these women "serial brides" (line 254) and thinks that "it can become an addiction" (lines 256-257). The groom is pathologising these serial brides. By giving a first-hand account of what the groom has heard from colleagues he aims to build a solid argument to substantiate his case (Edwards, 2003).

The bride agrees with the groom and makes a distinction between fantasy and reality and how "fantasy is often nicer than reality" (line 159). By drawing on this distinction the bride is adding to her earlier statement that their wedding was a "heavily practical arrangement" (line 236), but at the same time it was also real and not a fantasy. The couple separates themselves from others, whose weddings they disapprove of, because they are too large, too expensive and too much like a fairy-tale. The couple portrays themselves as being down-to-earth and real. In line 260 the groom mentions his cousins and how "they all had massive weddings", but have since divorced. He is comparing his cousins' weddings to his own wedding, whereby the comparison allows the groom and the bride and their wedding to be viewed favourably, as many of his cousins are now divorced. The negative view of the cousins' fairy-tale weddings justifies this couple's non-fairy-tale wedding. The discourse that this couple makes use of appears to be unusual in that their focus is not on having a fairy-tale wedding, but rather on diverging from this fairy-tale, fantasy wedding. One realises that the wedding was planned quickly and practically. The couple speaks about fantasy versus reality to elevate their own wedding, whereby reality trumps fantasy. They are reasoning that even though they did not have a fairy-tale wedding at least their wedding was real and not fake. Their

comparison has a soothing function for them, allowing them to have fewer regrets about their somewhat unconventional wedding (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

Similarly, in the extract below couple 8 also draw a distinction between what is real and what is a fairy-tale. Couple 8 incorporated only a few traditions into their wedding, for example, the bride did not walk down the aisle or wear a white dress and the groom did not give a speech. The couple also used a restaurant for a short ceremony, which was followed by a lunch. Their dislike of a fairy-tale wedding comes to the fore during the interview.

Extract 8, Interview 8, Lines 192-203

192    Interviewer: Ok, it sounds like the two of you were quite adamant about not
193                 having traditions. Can you tell me more about that?
194    Bride:       I don't know why we are like that
195    Groom:       I think it feels a bit phony to us, because I think some people um they
196                 feel like they have to do it and they feel, they're almost like, they're in
197                 the fairy-tale whereas to us it just seems like it's all this extra stuff, we're
198                 not in that fairy-tale not like
199    Bride:       I think we've also, we've grown up both in dysfunctional families and
200                 we both may have a more realistic idea about marriage or that and
201                 because of that to have this whole big like white wedding would just be,
202                 it would be the fairy-tale, but that's not either of one of us' mind-set I
203                 think I don't know how else to explain it

When asked why the couple was adamant about not having traditions as part of their wedding the bride is uncertain as to why. The groom responds that to them having traditions would feel "phony" (line 195) and like a "fairy-tale" (line 197), whereas he does not see them as being in a fairy-tale. He distinguishes their reality from a fairy-tale wedding. The bride joins in by explaining that both the bride and groom have grown up

in "dysfunctional families" (line 199) and because of their backgrounds the bride reasons that they have a realistic picture of marriage, which appears to be contrasted to an unrealistic fairy-tale image of marriage. She also, like the groom, makes the distinction between what is their reality and what is a fairy-tale. The couple indicates that they are in touch with reality, as opposed to being duped in a fairy-tale.

The couple is aware that the fairy-tale discourse exists and that it plays a significant role in how other couples do their wedding; however, the couple is conscious about locating themselves outside of this discourse. They account for why they did not have a traditional, fairy-tale wedding. In their talk the fairy-tale wedding comes out as inferior and phony. Similar to couple 5 this has a comforting effect, which serves to support the non-traditional and more egalitarian approach they used to plan their wedding (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

### 7.2.3  Conclusion

From the extracts above it is noticeable that the discourse of the bride's day serves an important function for the couples, how they perceive the wedding and how they negotiate and justify the variances in the distribution of labour during the wedding planning. For most of the couples interviewed the fairy-tale wedding is a necessary ambition. It reflects something special for the couple. By drawing on a fairy-tale discourse the couples construct their wedding planning as a necessary ritual. A strong aspect of this fairy-tale wedding is the idea that the wedding is the bride's day and mainly for the bride. Consequently it is simple to justify why the groom is minimally involved in the wedding planning; the wedding is in fact the *bride's* day and the bride plans the wedding so that the end result can be what she desires. Contrasted to this, for two of the couples the fairy-tale wedding is viewed as phony and unreal. These couples planned less traditional weddings that did not have the concept of the bride's day as their focal point. To some extent these two couples are disturbing this taken-for-granted

discourse. However, the couples are aware of the fairy-tale discourse and it is only through this awareness that they can deviate from it.

With this fairy-tale discourse one can easily justify stereotypical gender roles that reinforce benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1997). The displays of benevolent sexism are not viewed as sexism per se, because they are concealed in a benevolent fairy-tale discourse. The bride is in fact doing most of the work to seal herself in a marriage, whose outcomes are said to be less favourable for women (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). As Monger states in the introduction to his book, "in many respects and in many societies, marriage is more advantageous for the man than for the woman [...] she sacrifices freedom as she subjugates herself to her husband" (Monger, 2004, xi). And so one is confronted with the question of why women would do a great deal of work for less favourable outcomes. The following chapter of the analysis applies SJT (Jost & Banaji, 1994) to the bride's day and fairy-tale discourses to identify how these discourses enable sexist practices that are disadvantageous for women (Jost & Kay, 2005).

## 7.3 The Bride's Day and Fairy-Tale Discourses as System Justification

### 7.3.1 Introduction

In the previous section it was evident that the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding allow brides and grooms to situate themselves in a familiar and predictable framework. These wedding discourses also serve well to encourage and excuse particular behaviours. For instance, in the previous chapter it was apparent that if a groom is disengaged in the wedding planning he can simply justify his actions as him withdrawing himself, so that the bride can create *her* fairy-tale wedding. Similarly the bride would justify the groom's lack of involvement, not as inconsiderate or lazy, but rather as thoughtful so that she could plan *her* fairy-tale wedding that she supposedly desires to have. Consequently, it becomes evident that "women become complicit in their own subordination" (Tombaugh, 2009). These biased justifications can be understood through the lens of system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

It has been reasoned that "system justifying attitudes and the resulting discrimination that restricts women in the public sphere cannot be properly understood without considering well-entrenched, benevolently sexist beliefs about women's and men's roles in romantic relationships and home life" (Cikara et al., 2009, p. 457). This analysis section explores how brides and grooms maintain benevolently sexist attitudes and behaviours towards women while speaking about, and prior to that while actually doing, their wedding planning. Furthermore, in this chapter system justification theory is applied as a theoretical framework to understand how the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding support and promote the status quo. Four talked-about acts that repeated themselves in the interviews are analysed here, namely, *justifying the distribution of labour, the groom's lack of involvement, the father of the bride giving her away* and *changing surnames*. Although a range of other talked-about, gender specific acts emerged, such as, *the bride keeping her dress a secret, the groom giving a speech* and *the groom initiating the proposal*, the talk around these acts did not indicate system

justification as plainly as those mentioned in this section and are therefore not analysed here.

### 7.3.2 Justifying the Distribution of Labour

"According to system justification theory, people are motivated to preserve the belief that existing social arrangements are fair, legitimate, justifiable and necessary" (Jost et al., 2003, p. 13). Interestingly, people who are especially disadvantaged by these social arrangements are assumed to unconsciously internalise these beliefs more readily and would in fact have the highest motivation to reduce their psychological distress by maintaining the status quo (Jost et al., 2004). This is noticeable throughout the transcripts, whereby the brides, for example, provide a variety of justifications for the groom's lack of involvement in the wedding planning. The distribution of labour during the wedding planning is strongly skewed with most of the brides engaging in most of the wedding planning to varying degrees (Sniezek, 2005). This also resonates with research on the distribution of household labour, whereby women complete a greater share of household work even if they are employed outside the home (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). Likewise, wedding planning "involves similar tasks [to] routine housework including decorating, making meal choices, shopping and coordinating family schedules" (Sniezek, 2005, p. 216). Two couples explained their wedding planning in more egalitarian terms; however, upon further prompting the brides' greater inputs become evident. One obvious deviation is noted, namely couple 6, where the groom completes most of the wedding planning according to the bride's prescriptions, because of the bride's busy work-travel schedule. It is noted that the groom's greater involvement was not done to perhaps challenge gendered norms or to create a more gender egalitarian relationship, but rather because the situation necessitated it. Although the distribution of labour is skewed for the majority of the couples there are strong justifications as to why the wedding planning was done in this manner (Humble, Zvonkovic & Walker, 2008). It becomes noticeable that the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding

encourage and enable these justifications (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). The following extract illustrates with clarity how the bride in interview 1 goes about justifying the variance of the workloads that the groom and she took on during the wedding planning.

Extract 9, Interview 1, Lines 1432-1438

1432　Bride:　　　I think maybe, thinking about it now I probably took on a lot of the

1433　　　　　　roles, maybe because I am a woman and I decided that…not he wouldn't

1434　　　　　　be able to do it or he wouldn't be competent in doing it, but maybe that

1435　　　　　　I just thought that it wasn't fair for him to do it or didn't expect for you

1436　　　　　　to do it. Like, because I did think it was too girly, you know, why would

1437　　　　　　he want to do the napkin rings, why would he want to plan the confetti

1438　　　　　　or…

The bride refers to her thoughts on fairness, as well as her expectations of the groom and uses these concepts to justify why she took on more of the "roles" (line 1433). She explains that she did not think it would be fair for the groom to be more involved. The bride employs a gendered framework, when she says "I did think it was too girly" (line 1436), to bring about this measure of fairness (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Although she completed most of the wedding planning, this is considered to be fair, because the bride is a woman (Sniezek, 2005). Employing the explanation of gender and gender stereotypes, whereby the bride takes on the more feminine roles, creates the belief that the unequal distribution of labour is fair and that therefore everyone benefits (Jost, 1995; Jost & Kay, 2005). Consequently the bride has positioned herself in a subservient position, most likely at a "nonconscious level of awareness" (Jost et al., 2004, p. 881), meaning that she is presumably unaware of what she is doing, and she provides justification for doing so. Furthermore, the bride expresses consideration for the groom when she poses rhetorical questions about him doing napkin rings and planning confetti, yet in this extract she apparently does not show equal consideration for herself. In displaying consideration for the groom, the bride evokes sympathy for the

groom and thereby further justifies why it is reasonable for the bride to do the more uninteresting, menial and gender stereotypical tasks of the wedding planning. Consistent with this, research has proposed that intergroup friendships increase affection between the disadvantaged group of women and the advantaged group of men and so serve to justify unequal relationships (Jackman & Crane, 1986). This intergroup friendship between the bride and the groom appears to skew the couple's and other's perceptions of justice and is most likely influential in justifying this unequal distribution of labour.

The bride's day discourse presents a backdrop for the bride's justifications. There is an implicit understanding that the wedding is about the bride and therefore the tasks of the wedding planning are meant to be done by the bride (Humble et al., 2008; Sniezek, 2005). The tasks are explained as being feminine and consequently the bride draws the conclusion that as a woman she should do the tasks. This correlates somewhat with evidence of women's depressed sense of entitlement, whereby results of the research conducted indicate that on average women would pay themselves less than their male counterparts for the same work completed (Jost, 1997). Similarly, the bride reveals a depressed sense of entitlement compared to the groom, not, as in Jost's (1997) research, by paying herself less, but by justifying why she completed most of the gender stereotyped, low-status tasks, such as, doing napkin rings and planning confetti (Sniezek, 2005). Her talk suggests that she deserves less than the groom. In line with system justification theory, an egalitarian alternative to the status quo is rejected by the bride when she reasons through the use of gender roles why it was not fair for the groom to do certain tasks (Jost, 1995; Jost et al., 2004).

Similarly, in the following extract of interview 7, the naturalisation of gender roles appears to have a system-justifying function. The dialogue captures how the couple employs gender roles to naturalise the distribution of labour and the completion of specific tasks during the wedding planning.

Extract 10, Interview 7, Lines 856-869

| 856 | Bride: | From my side that was quite important, like he did the honeymoon |
| 857 | | and I did the wedding |
| 858 | Groom: | And I think it's slightly also a gender thing, I sorted out all the big |
| 859 | | finance stuff paying the deposit for the venue, paying the photographer, |
| 860 | | partly due to my job being in finance and accounting so it's natural for |
| 861 | | me to then make payments and invoices and stuff. It just felt natural for |
| 862 | | me to sort out all that big finance admin stuff |
| 863 | Bride: | The biggest thing that was important to both of us was the venue and |
| 864 | | the food all the small details of the tables that was my job um |
| 865 | Groom: | And making sure there's service providers, I basically made, got the DJ and |
| 866 | | the photographer, after we picked who to get I mean I then made the |
| 867 | | payments |
| 868 | Bride: | That's not because it's gender specific, that's just the way it works for |
| 869 | | us |

In this extract the naturalisation of tasks in terms of complementary stereotypes creates the illusion of more equality compared to the previous extract (Jost & Kay, 2005). The illusion of equality is distorted inversely in that the couple describe the groom's role in the wedding planning as being greater than that of the bride. It is explained that because the groom has a career related to finance and accounting, he "sorted out all the big finance stuff" (lines 858-859). The groom is rationalising why he completed the payments. The division of labour is explained as a result of the groom's occupation, rather than his gender (Sniezek, 2005). Financial matters are considered to be stereotypically male matters, as they are in line with the man being the breadwinner, while the bride organises the table decorations, which is considered to be a stereotypically female matter; a task that is also synonymous with being a homemaker (Diamond, 2000; Hegarty, Watson, Fletcher & McQueen, 2001). Here the couple justifies

the division of labour through the use of taken-for-granted gender stereotypes (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Jost & Banaji, 1994).The gender stereotypes in turn allow the division of labour to be felt or viewed as natural. At the end of the extract (lines 868-869) the bride explains that the division of labour was not gender specific, but rather that this is just how it worked for the couple, because the decisions were based on natural feelings and choices. This suggests that the gender roles are considered to be so ingrained that they are not viewed as distinct gender roles. However, through the naturalisation of complementary gender roles, the bride is justifying a gendered and unequal view of fairness, the unequal division of labour and therefore her disadvantaged position (Jost & Hamilton, 2005). Wood and Eagly (2002) have noted that sexism is especially prevalent when gender differences and gender stereotypes are legitimised. The complementary gender stereotypes mentioned above then allow the couple to differentiate between the big tasks of the groom and the small tasks of the bride, while in actual fact the bride completed a far greater share of the wedding planning than the groom, which is elaborated on throughout the interview. Furthermore, the groom even corrects himself in line 866, when he initially says that he "got the DJ and the photographer" (lines 865-866) and then amends this earlier statement and says that he actually only paid for the service providers. He firstly inflates the amount of work he completed and then amends this statement, which indicates that he completed less work than initially stated. In conclusion the complementary gender stereotypes appear to counterbalance the advantaged position of the groom so that there seems to be a balanced distribution of labour, providing evidence of system justification (Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Kay, 2005).

Similar to the bride in the previous extract, in the following extract of interview 1 the bride refutes that gender roles are prescribed. She identifies the allocation of tasks as natural and automatic.

Extract 11, Interview 1, Lines 1486-1495

1486   Bride:        With regards to the tradition and the gender based type em,

| 1487 | | wedding thing, I do think there is…automatic roles that women do tend |
|---|---|---|
| 1488 | | to take, me that I did take and [he] took, but it wasn't because we felt we |
| 1489 | | had to. I think it was just a natural thing that happened. If I did ask [him] to |
| 1490 | | do something that maybe someone would consider girly he would |
| 1491 | | have done it, to an extent obviously if he could. But I think with a wedding, as |
| 1492 | | [he] said, it is mainly about the woman, which is a generalisation, women |
| 1493 | | want to do it and they enjoy it |
| 1494 | Groom: | You've got free reign to be as girly as you want. You're the princess |
| 1495 | | for the day, bottom line |

The bride explains that there are "automatic roles" (line 1487) that women and men tend to take on. This process is identified as occurring naturally, which is a description that is also present in Humble and her colleagues' (2008) research. In line 1492 the bride agrees with the groom's earlier statement that weddings are predominantly about the bride. She says that brides want to do the wedding planning and they enjoy doing this. The bride is employing the discourse of the bride's day to justify why brides do, and also why she did, most of the wedding planning. By using the bride's day discourse the bride is giving the impression that she has agency and choice in this matter. Through the use of the bride's day discourse she also provides an explanation and justification for the groom and reasons as to why he was not more involved. Furthermore, the groom gently shifts responsibility for the wedding planning onto the bride by implicating a fairy-tale discourse in which the bride is the princess (line 1494). The fairy-tale discourse constructs the bride as the princess and main character of the wedding, which is presented as a privileged position (Sniezek, 2005). Despite this construction of a privileged position it is noticeable that the bride completed far more of the wedding planning than the groom did, which perpetuates gender inequality (Tombaugh, 2009). This introduces a disadvantaged, rather than a privileged, position (Jost & Kay, 2005).

Interestingly, "stereotypes that are flattering (e.g., benevolent sexism) or that are based in romantic fantasies […] may be particularly resistant to transformation" (Kite, Deaux & Haines, 2008, p. 227). The fairy-tale discourse presents the bride as the princess and suggests an overall positive feeling of and towards the bride (Sniezek, 2005). Benevolent sexism is defined as being comprised of "a set of attitudes that favour keeping women in restricted roles, but are subjectively positive in feeling and tone" (Viki et al., 2003, p. 533). Consistent with this definition of benevolent sexism the role of the princess in the fairy-tale discourse is also restrictive towards the bride, because it prescribes that she must subscribe to traditional and biased gender roles, so that she builds a positive relationship with the groom, which in turn presents a perception of fairness (Glick & Fiske, 2001). In their research Glick and Fiske (2001) conclude that benevolent sexism justifies gender inequality and it therefore has a system-justifying function. Consequently, the fairy-tale discourse utilised in the extract above makes use of benevolent sexism to describe the bride as the princess in the wedding and as a result promotes system justification.

### 7.3.3   The Groom's Lack of Involvement

In the following three extracts the grooms openly declare their lack of involvement in the wedding planning process. These extracts connect well with the previous extracts that indicated the justifications of the far greater involvement of the bride in the wedding planning. With the bride doing most of the work and the groom remaining disengaged the couple collaborates so that their roles are seen as complementary (Jost & Kay, 2005). In the extract below the groom elaborates on his lack of involvement.

Extract 12, Interview 4, Lines 172-178

172     Groom:        It was pretty relaxed, I tried to stay as little involved as I could

173     Interviewer: Why that?

174     Groom:        I don't know, like every girl has a dream of her wedding and stuff, for

| 175 | me it doesn't really matter, for me the day is just about getting married |
| 176 | and sharing that experience with friends and family, I'm not too worried about |
| 177 | if it's this place or that place. Like I did help you choose some stuff, but |
| 178 | the choices I didn't put a lot of thought in |

While speaking about the wedding planning the groom admits that he tried to involve himself as little as he could. When asked about this by the interviewer he gives two reasons for his lack of involvement. First, he alleviates himself of responsibility and justifies his lack of involvement by explaining: "I don't know, like every girl has a dream of her wedding" (line 174) (Beach & Metzger, 1997). The dream wedding is a version of the fairy-tale wedding discourse, with both discourses representing a fantasy realm. This discourse enables the groom to account for his actions. The emphasis that he places on gender suggests that the bride is more interested in the wedding and that he is being considerate and chivalrous by withdrawing himself from wedding related matters (Humble et al., 2008). The idea of a dream-like, or fairy-tale wedding, clarifies why the groom was not more involved and consequently the status quo is accepted and taken-for-granted. The groom's paternalism also enables his intentions to be seen as considerate, friendly and loving; however, the restrictions that this places on the bride, whereby she is left to do the majority of the wedding work, goes unmentioned (Viki et al., 2003). Second, the groom implies that his focus is on more important and meaningful aspects of the wedding, such as "getting married and sharing that experience with friends and family" (lines 175-176), rather than choosing a wedding venue. By alluding to his virtuous intentions the groom creates a favourable view of himself and his consideration for the bride comes to the fore. This benevolence serves to maintain the traditional gender roles that are taken-for-granted and expected in the wedding planning (Sniezek, 2005). Furthermore, the benevolence displayed here "serves to justify the conventional system and gender inequality" (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007, p. 607). This established system noticeably comes to the fore in the following extract.

Extract 13, Interview 5, Lines 177-181

177    Interviewer:  How much organising or planning did it take to get everything to

178                        happen on the wedding day?

179    Groom:        Nothing for me, except going with her mum to the shop to get a suit

180                        and stuff. I left it over to you organising it, it was all already done

181    Bride:         Yeah, I organised it, it wasn't too much

Similar to the previous extract, the groom in extract 13 honestly admits that it took no planning or organising for him to have the wedding. The groom is rather blasé about his lack of involvement, which suggests that due to his gender he believes that his input is not necessarily needed. The bride supports the groom's admission in line 181 by minimising the amount of work it took to plan their wedding. However, barely a minute later the couple identifies how stressful the wedding planning really was for the bride. During the discussions of all that the bride had to do while caring for their new born baby the groom acknowledges "that's one thing I didn't realise how stressful it was for you" (lines 210-211). Only upon closer inspection is the couple able to identify how unequal the distribution of labour between them was. This suggests that the framework, whereby the bride completes most or all of the wedding planning and the groom assumes a more privileged position through his lack of involvement, is deeply entrenched and taken-for-granted (Sniezek, 2005; Tombaugh, 2009).

The following extract shows the groom while he draws on reasons why the wedding is a greater event for the bride than for the groom. His explanation serves to maintain gendered practices as they are.

Extract 14, Interview 10, Lines 304-311

304    Groom:        You see her little niece said "she's a princess, she's a princess" so now when

305                        she grows up she'll remember how when it's her time for that wedding

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 306 | | she'll also want to be like "she's a princess", like Barbies have their little |
| 307 | | wedding thing. Her dad spoke to me before and I like realised a lot from |
| 308 | | that, he said like ever since she was a little girl princesses and that that |
| 309 | | was like it's a big day for them, so obviously like a big day for me, but |
| 310 | Bride: | I think you wanted it to be a fairy-tale, because you wanted it to be for |
| 311 | | me. I didn't even know you thought like that, but that's cool |

The groom mentions why he was not more involved in the wedding planning. He uses the fairy-tale discourse and the influence of the bride's father to justify why the wedding was more for the bride. He builds a rhetorical account of examples involving other people to appear benevolent and thereby enhances his argument that the wedding is in fact more for the bride (Edwards, 2003). Similar to the groom in extract 12, the groom's paternalistic motives of consideration, concern and love for the bride positions him as particularly generous and chivalrous (Viki et al., 2003). This serves to reduce the notion of the groom's lack of involvement, as well as the unequal distribution of labour. Although the bride initially said "I would have liked him to do more" (line 255-256) and when the groom mentions childhood fantasies about fairy-tale weddings she says "I didn't think that" (line 303), she reframes her experience at the end of the extract when she inflates the groom's consideration for her. She says "I think you wanted it to be a fairy-tale, because you wanted it to be for me" (lines 310-311). The fairy-tale discourse is so entrenched in ideas about weddings that it becomes difficult, and perhaps impossible for some, to avoid it; instead it is defended (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). As Jackman (1994) notes, when inequality is long-standing then stable dominant groups benefit more from having positive attitudes towards subordinate groups. Through this expression of positive attitudes subordinate groups will themselves incorporate these positive attitudes of themselves, which makes the inequality far more difficult to recognise and resist (Dixon et al., 2012). Similarly, the bride places the groom's lack of involvement in a positive light, suggesting that the groom was actually being considerate and loving towards her. The pervasiveness of the fairy-tale wedding

discourse assists in this and constrains the bride to speak and give opinions within the limits of this discourse. After the bride's two initial attempts to say that she is opposed to this discourse, she submits and emphasises the groom's benevolence and paternalistic chivalry, whereby she alludes to his care for her (Viki et al., 2003). Although she presents the groom's benevolence favourably, as mentioned earlier, this can be restrictive for her, because it hinders gender equality and maintains the gender unequal status quo (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Contrasted to the three extracts above, the groom in the following extract explains why it was important to have a more egalitarian approach to the wedding planning and why it was necessary for him to be involved in the wedding planning.

Extract 15, Interview 3, Lines 281-289

| 281 | Groom: | It's like you say the united front thing, you don't do that from the |
| 282 | | start you're this divided couple, who the wife does this, really you can't |
| 283 | | go back ten years later and say "ja, but honey, I'm bringing in the |
| 284 | | money, you bring in the, you clean the floors" that's not how it works |
| 285 | | now-a-days I guess, so I started right from the beginning. We actually |
| 286 | | did that quite consciously and proactively just to ensure that everyone's |
| 287 | | involved in the process |
| 288 | Bride: | That was really good, ja, we went together for the music the flowers |
| 289 | | the what-not, everything. It was really, really nice and… |

The groom suggests that how the work of the wedding planning is distributed reflects how the couple will engage in the distribution of household work once the couple is married, which resonates with research findings on wedding planning and household work (Humble et al., 2008). He presents fairness as a relational value for the couple. The groom is aware of a system which is biased toward men and encourages women to "clean the floors" (line 284) and mentions how they both consciously wanted to be

involved in the wedding planning. The groom assumes a less masculine role by being more involved in the wedding planning; however, he identifies the benefits of wanting a more egalitarian relationship (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Sniezek, 2005). The groom shows consideration for the bride while he explains his active participation, which positions him as a caring, loving and thoughtful partner, since wedding planning work is considered to be women's work (Sniezek, 2005). The bride expresses her appreciation for this when she says "that was really good" (line 288) and "it was really, really nice" (line 289). Despite the groom's positive tone about engaging in an egalitarian wedding planning process, it is still noted throughout the interview that the bride completed more of the wedding planning, even though this was not a great deal more. The variance between the groom's talk and his actions is minimised through the groom's mention of fairness, his active participation in the wedding planning and his expression of consideration towards the bride. This apparent 'inconsistency' between the groom's talk and his actions suggests that an entrenched system - which prescribes that women do all the wedding work - is strongly skewed, that even when men are involved (compared to not being involved) the distribution of labour during the wedding planning is seen as fair (Rudman & Heppen, 2003).

### 7.3.4   The Father of the Bride giving her away

The father of the bride giving her away represents a traditional act that 8 of the couples that were interviewed engaged in. The act for these couples consisted of a process whereby the father walks the bride down the aisle of the chapel or church and then gives her to the groom. Two brides were not walked down the aisle for different reasons. One bride's father was unable to attend the wedding due to ill health; in addition, the bride was married in a restaurant, which did not present an option of walking down an aisle. Another bride was married at a registry office, which also did not give the option of walking down an aisle. Extract 16 introduces this act of the bride's

father giving the bride away to the groom. The couple in interview 7 view this as a very important and special moment of the wedding ceremony.

Extract 16, Interview 7, Lines 614-626

614     Interviewer: OK, um, did you get walked down the aisle?

615     Bride:          Yes, my dad walked me down the aisle

616     Interviewer: Why did you do that?

617     Bride:          Um, because I've got a very, very strong bond with my dad and then

618                        I'm the only girl, I know everybody else's dad's do it as well. I think it's a

619                        dad's privilege of walking his daughter down the aisle to pass his

620                        authority over to the husband

621     Groom:         Yes, I think there's a beautiful, what do you call it, symbolic gesture of

622                        the dad saying "listen, she was under my wing up to now, I trust you

623                        enough to give my daughter up to you now" so that's the one thing at

624                        every wedding that I actually enjoy, is watching firstly the bride walking

625                        down with her dad and then the husband to be…

626     Bride:          …taking over

When asked why the bride was walked down the aisle by her father the bride first mentions that she has a strong bond with her father and that she is the only daughter. She admits that other fathers do this as well and then motivates that it is a father's privilege to do this and then pass the authority he holds over his daughter to her soon-to-be husband. The bride positions herself submissively when she explains the authority that the father and then the groom hold over her. She indicates her acceptance of authority being held over her, although it subjects her to a submissive and therefore disadvantaged position (Jost, 1997). Despite this sexist description the bride expresses a warm and positive view of the act being a "dad's privilege" (line 619).

The groom describes the act of the bride being walked down the aisle by her father and then being given to the groom as "beautiful" (line 621) and something that he enjoys watching at weddings. The groom refers to the bride being under her father's wing and then his wing, suggesting that she requires protection by a man. He positions himself as the bride's protector and thereby expresses paternalistic chivalry towards her, which allows both the bride and the groom to be viewed favourably (Jost & Kay, 2005). According to Jost and Kay (2005, p. 498) "in cases of gender-based stereotyping, attitudes toward the disadvantaged group of women are very often favorable in content and yet prejudicial in their consequences". Such benevolent sexism comes to the fore when the groom uses language that describes the bride being under her father's wing and then being given to the groom. The groom's attitude toward the bride is warm and overall favourable; however, the implication of the bride being under a man's protection is restrictive to her and therefore promotes gender inequality (Viki et al., 2003). The bride's acceptance and support of her submissive position, as well as the authority of the father and the groom, provides evidence of system justification (Jost et al., 2004).

In contrast to the extract above, the couple in the following extract identifies how the act of the bride being given from one man to another is a rather sexist act. This appears to be a novel realisation during the interview for both the bride and the groom.

Extract 17, Interview 4, Lines 340-351

| 340 | Bride: | The father usually gives the bride away to the husband, 'cause now |
| 341 | | you change of surname it's kind of like, how can you say it |
| 342 | Groom: | Don't you think it's kind of sexist giving ownership away, like selling a |
| 343 | | vehicle, isn't it |
| 344 | Interviewer: | Ok, tell me about that? |
| 345 | Bride: | You can see it that way, ja, I guess |
| 346 | Groom: | I'm saying another way of looking at that is like selling a vehicle, like |
| 347 | | this was mine, now |

348     Bride:          [laughs] it belongs to you

349     Groom:          Ja, I don't know, that must come from some old school cultural thing

350                     when the man was, the father was boss of the house and everything he

351                     owned in the house, now he's giving away his daughter

During interview 4 the concept of the bride's father walking her down the aisle to give her to the groom is discussed. The bride connects this act with that of the bride changing her surname to the groom's surname. Interestingly, the groom names this and identifies sexist intentions of ownership within these acts and compares them to the transaction of selling a vehicle. By being likened to the vehicle the bride is being objectified, which suggests that the act of one man giving the bride to another is in effect objectifying the bride. It is perhaps unusual that the groom would identify and mention this sexist act, since it is he who would theoretically benefit from the ownership of the bride. Contrasted to this the bride seems hesitant about the groom's interpretation when she says "you can see it that way, ja, I guess" (line 345) and laughs about this idea in line 348. The groom then makes a connection between the act of giving the bride away and an historical and cultural notion that allowed the father to be the "boss of the house" (line 350). The connection serves to dampen the effect of a noticeably sexist act, because it is justified as having originated in an historical and cultural belief, which is possibly no longer valid. Despite the suggested invalidity of the historical meaning of the act, the act of the bride being given from father to groom is still common (Ingraham, 1999).

The passing on of the bride from father to groom represents a tradition, a system-justifying ritual, which keeps gender roles in place and has thus been resistant to change (Humble et al., 2008). From the extracts above the sexist nature of this act is noticeable. The bride is treated like an object over which men have authority (see extract 16). Despite the open display of this sexist act and the bride's disadvantaged position, the act prevails. This provides strong support for "a *system-justifying* motive, whereby

people seek to maintain or enhance the legitimacy and stability of existing forms of social arrangements" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 113; emphasis in original). As the theory suggests, disadvantaged groups, such as women, are perhaps more likely to support an unequal ideology, because they have the greatest need to alleviate the ideological dissonance and their unconscious psychological distress (Jost et al., 2003). Consequently, extract 16 suggests strong support for system justification motives.

### 7.3.5   Changing Surnames

During the course of the interviews the question of changing or retaining surnames arises. This is discussed here as the changing of surnames represents a tradition through which patriarchy continues (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, White & Hamm, 2002; Speer, 2005). It indicates that the language used and the way in which it is used is favourable toward men (Kleinman, 2002) and that women, unlike men, are required to change their identity to be married. As Kleinman (2002) notes in her essay on sexist language "we can use words to maintain the status quo" (p. 300), which is certainly the case when bride after bride changes her surname to that of the groom. Furthermore, it is apparent that "we know from history that making a group invisible makes it easier for the powerful to do what they want with members of that group. Perhaps that's why linguists use the strong language of "symbolic annihilation" to refer to the disappearance of women into male-based terms" (Kleinman, 2002, p. 302). Similarly, the bride's identity disappears into that of the groom's when she adopts his surname in the place of her own (Suarez, 1997). The following analysis about the discussions surrounding surnames provides examples of system justification in action. In most extracts both the bride and the groom defend the need for the bride to change her surname.

Extract 18, Interview 10, Lines 464-475

464     Interviewer: Ok, did either of you change your surname after getting married?

465     Bride:         Yes, I did, not on my ID yet, but yes I did

| 466 | Interviewer: | Ok, why that? |
| 467 | Bride: | Because I feel when you get married it's a wo... I still spoke to him lots |
| 468 | | before the wedding it was tough for me to give up my surname, I never |
| 469 | | liked my surname, it's not a beautiful surname, but it's just because I'm |
| 470 | | very family orientated, but for me to take on my husband's surname |
| 471 | | and become a family when we have children one day we've all got the |
| 472 | | same surname and everything |
| 473 | Interviewer: | Ok, ok, and both of you were happy with that |
| 474 | Groom: | I didn't ask her I told her [Interviewer laughs – groom remains serious] |

It could be surmised that the bride initially wants to give a reason for changing her surname based on gender, when she says "it's a wo..." (line 467), which perhaps suggests that she wants to say "it's a woman's *role*". However, she does not complete her sentence and then admits to the difficulty that changing her surname presented for her. Her surname represented an attachment to her family of origin; however, she perceives that to have an affiliation to the groom and their unborn children she would have to adopt the groom's surname. The possibility of the groom changing his surname to that of the bride's surname is not considered or mentioned as an option, suggesting a lack of mutuality in this taken-for-granted practice (Suarez, 1997). When asked if the couple was happy with their decision the groom dismissively and prescriptively states that he told her what she should do. The authority and dominance of the groom and the sexist hostility of this statement against the bride go unchallenged and are perhaps also accepted (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Since it is a societal norm for brides to change their surname to the groom's surname after marriage, the groom's statement, although prescriptive, is in line with the existing social order (Goldin & Shim, 2004). It is clear that the couple's options of changing surnames are limited to the existing social arrangements. The groom's hostile sexism is so overt that the interviewer laughs at the perceived sarcasm of this statement, but rapidly realises that the groom's tone of voice

was serious. He also makes no attempt to suggest that his comment was sarcastic or intended as humorous.

In extract 19 the bride is asked if she changed her surname. She explains what happened during a visit to home affairs and then elaborates on the groom wanting her to take his surname. It should be noted that the groom was not present during the interview at the time that the changing of surnames was discussed. This may have influenced why the bride was more open to speaking about a deviation of this tradition, compared to the other brides discussed in this section.

Extract 19, Interview 1, Lines 1289-1310

1289   Interviewer: Ok, mmm. Did you change your surname?

1290   Bride:          We're busy arg… with that at the moment.

1291   Interviewer: Tell me about that.

1292   Bride:          Em, when I was younger I never wanted to get married, so I was

1293                      always happy keeping my surname, em, in previous relationships I've

1294                      always been more dominant in the relationships, so I've always wanted

1295                      to keep my surname, obviously with him, em it's different and I'm happy

1296                      to take his surname, em, I don't know, we have not really thought about

1297                      it. I did sign on the pap…we hadn't really discussed it, but when I did

1298                      sign the documents on the register, I did sign [my surname-his

1299                      surname], but when I went to home affairs last week the pastor's

1300                      registered me as [his surname]. And then I messaged him and

1301                      said "listen, how would you feel…it's registered as your surname…how

1302                      would you feel" and that's when we sort of, but we still haven't

1303                      discussed it properly. He wants me to take his surname, I still don't know

1304                      if I want to. So, I've always wanted to double-barrel it, always, but he's

1305                      not too happy about it.

1306   Interviewer: Ok, would he double-barrel?

| 1307 | Bride: | No, definitely not [laughs], although I have seen friends that have |
| 1308 | | done it. He says it's too modern, he says "back in the day, no-one ever |
| 1309 | | argued, you just took the surname that was it", I don't know, there is |
| 1310 | | probably more reason for me wanting to keep my name. |

The bride explains "I was always happy keeping my surname" (lines 1292-1293), because she did not intend on marrying when she was younger. She points out that in previous relationships she was the more dominant partner and concludes from this that she wanted to keep her surname. In this instance retaining a surname appears to have an association to dominance for the bride. This is in line with patriarchy, whereby men are identified as more dominant and it is men who would retain their surnames (O'Connor & Drury, 1999). The bride indicates that with the groom this is different, suggesting that he is more dominant or that they are equally dominant in the relationship and therefore responds with "I'm happy to take his surname" (lines 1295-1296). Although the bride says that she is happy to take the groom's surname she subsequently mentions that she signed the register with a double-barrelled surname. After describing what she discovered at home affairs the bride mentions that the groom would like her to take his surname, but she also expresses her uncertainty about this. She seemingly contradicts her earlier statement of "I'm happy to take his surname" (lines 1295-1296) when she says "I've always wanted to double-barrel it" (line 1304). This implies that the bride is possibly "happy to take his surname" (lines 1295-1296), but in the form of a double-barrelled surname. She acknowledges the grooms resistance with this option. When the interviewer asks if the groom would double-barrel his surname the bride responds with laughter. The laughter suggests the bride's disbelief at the thought of the groom changing his surname (Macpherson, 2008). She explains along which vein the groom's argument goes with regards to changing surnames. He supposedly draws on historical practices as a reason for why the bride should change her surname to his. By drawing on accepted historical practices the groom is able to build his argument on a sturdy and existing foundation. Interestingly, from the bride's

account it is evident that the groom prescribes what the bride should do; however, it is indicated that he would not compromise with regards to this practice.

The bride displays uncertainty and hesitation about the practice of changing her surname. Although she mentions "I don't know, there is probably more reason for me wanting to keep my name" (lines 1309-1310), she does not mention what this reason may be. The bride expresses her uncertainty about this practice when she says "I don't know" (line 1309) (Beach & Metzger, 1997). Contrasted to the bride's indecisiveness, according to the bride, the groom is certain that he would not change his surname. When the interviewer asks the bride, if the groom would change his surname, the bride responds "no, definitely not" (line 1307). This illustrates that the uncertainty and indecisiveness of the bride is more easily influenced than the perceived certainty and decisiveness of the groom. An influential factor in this decision-making process is that the existing tradition is for women to change their surname to that of the groom's surname once married (Goldin & Shim, 2004). Therefore, deviating from this social norm requires conscious and purposeful effort. From a system-justifying perspective it is understood that people would avoid deviating from these existing social norms, as doing so may encourage backlash towards women (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost et al., 2004). The bride's response here also indicates that her relational needs may prevent system-challenging behaviours from taking place (Hennes, Nam, Stern & Jost, 2012). It is noteworthy that before the interview took place the bride signed the information and informed consent form (see Appendix 2) with the groom's surname, which suggests and provides support for system-justifying behaviour and her compliance with the existing social order.

Unlike the bride in the previous extract, who is uncertain about changing her surname, the bride in the following extract strongly defends why she changed her surname. This defence suggests strong system-justifying tendencies.

Extract 20, Interview 7, Lines 819-833

819    Interviewer: Then also did either of you change your surnames?

820    Bride:         I changed my surname

821    Interviewer: Ok, and what was the reason for doing that?

822    Bride:         Ach no it's just to me it's important to become one with a new

823                   family, again it's not sentimental, but traditional, a bit sentimental that

824                   whole thing of um um it's important for me to also show that I'm

825                   accepting um [him] as my authority, I know that sounds very bad we are not

826                   living in the um medieval times, but as the head of the house, so that is

827                   important for me to continue with that and then practicalities. I find so

828                   many people with double surnames, double surnames doesn't do it for

829                   me and secondly friends of ours that have kept their surname, there are

830                   so many problems with the kids in school where they are their own

831                   surname and the kids have dad's surname and the friends are

832                   asking 'aren't your parents married then' so that's reality, but for me it was

833                   handing myself over to his family to become part of his family.

In the extract above the bride elaborates that taking the groom's surname was important to her "to become one with a new family" (lines 822-823). She explains that taking the groom's surname is "traditional" (line 823) and "a bit sentimental" (line 823). The bride emphasises this point by mentioning that it is important for her to accept the groom as her authority. She immediately moderates this answer by acknowledging that it "sounds very bad we are not living in the um medieval times" (lines 825-826); however, she accepts the groom as the "head of the house" (line 826). This statement is intended to minimise the earlier claim that she accepts the groom as her authority. However, being the head of the house and having authority are synonymous. The bride draws on a biblical discourse of women being submissive and indicates that she accepts her subordinate position in her relationship with the groom, therefore, she finds it "important" (line 822) to change her surname to his (Emens, 2007; Lyall, 1996). Through

her subordinate position the bride supports a paternalistic framework in which she is subservient (Jost & Kay, 2005). Furthermore, this suggests the influential nature of other discourses and ideologies, such as a biblical discourse and a religious ideology, in maintaining patriarchal practices (Froschauer, 2014; Rakoczy, 2004).

To defend her response the bride mentions the impracticalities of double-barrelling a surname. She draws on accounts by friends to emphasise her position and mentions how not changing their surname has had negative effects for the children, who were given the surname of the father. While referring to the experiences that her friends have had she says "so that's reality" (line 832). This serves to create the understanding that realistically it would not make sense to have a different surname to the groom. Although this is not the focal point here, it is noteworthy that in this account the patriarchal nature of the parents giving the children the father's surname goes unchallenged and therefore appears to be the accepted norm. The taken-for-granted and accepted nature with which the changing of surnames is spoken about illustrates the rigidity of the traditions that this bride subscribes to (Fox, 2010). The reliance on, and the justification of the status quo, means that this bride is able to avoid "challenging, and potentially threatening, information" (Shepherd, 2012, p. 5), related to her beliefs about marriage. Allowing these beliefs to be challenged may require a change in behaviour; therefore, defending her attitude may be less problematic than changing her socially accepted behaviour (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

The sexism in the following extract is less obvious. The bride expresses a slight deviation from the norm with regards to changing her surname (Forbes et al., 2002). However, what the groom identifies as an act of "compromise" (line 935) is more beneficial for the groom, rather than for the bride.

Extract 21a, Interview 9, Lines 934-956

934    Interviewer: Did either of you change your surname?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 935 | Groom: | Oh, ja, it's a compromise |
| 936 | Bride: | I changed my surname, double-barrelled it, the only reason I didn't |
| 937 | | take his surname is because I have a PhD degree and I've published |
| 938 | | some papers under my name, so I thought just career wise keeping my |
| 939 | | surname would make people, suddenly if you have a completely |
| 940 | | different surname they don't know it's the same person. So I don't |
| 941 | | know if that was stupid or not, because now it's a very long surname, |
| 942 | Groom: | Well it's only four little letters, I guess my surname is quite long |
| 943 | Bride: | I'm used to it, I don't even think about it any more |
| 944 | Interviewer: | [to groom] May I ask why you didn't change? |
| 945 | Groom: | Ja, I never gave it some thought |
| 946 | Bride: | Mr. [says her surname-his surname] [laughs] |
| 947 | Groom: | [laughs] It just never even occurred to me, I've got to be honest, the |
| 948 | | funniest thing being with [her] having this double-barrel I've just retained |
| 949 | | my surname, but I sometimes get referred to with the double-barrel |
| 950 | | surname and I think it's quite funny, but ja it just simply never occurred |
| 951 | | to me and yet it wasn't a problem, I wasn't insistent that [she] had to |
| 952 | | change her name, it wasn't an issue, I understood um the reasons |
| 953 | | behind it and I was quite happy um it was a compromise |
| 954 | Bride: | But I always wanted to, I could have just retained my surname, but I |
| 955 | | always wanted to somehow have his surname so that was the decision |
| 956 | | and also I like his surname |

The interviewer's reluctance to ask a question that suggests a deviation from the norm comes forth in her hesitant questioning at the beginning of the extract when she asks "may I ask why you didn't change?" (line 944). It is observable in line 934, amongst others, that this cautious tone in questioning is not how the interviewer usually phrases questions. The tentative and polite wording of "may" (line 944) indicates that the

interviewer is aware that she is touching on a taboo topic and is aware that this may be threatening or offensive for the groom.

The groom responds to the interviewer's question about changing surnames. He mentions twice that it was a compromise (lines 935 & 953). Despite saying this it is rapidly noticed that the bride double-barrelled her surname, while the groom retained his surname, which suggests that this was in fact not a compromise. Due to the Eurocentric social norm that a woman will change her surname to her husband's surname once married, the double-barrelling of a surname could be seen as a paternalistic concession granted by the groom (Tombaugh, 2009). The unusual and strange nature of the groom changing his surname is observed through the couple's laugh in line 946 and 947. The humour in this context is "used as a way of coping with, rather than actually challenging" (Macpherson, 2008, p. 1080) the existing forms of social arrangement, and thus functions as a system-justifying strategy (Hennes et al., 2012).

Research has shown that women who are older at the time of marriage, have advanced degrees and have made a name for themselves, possibly through writing and publishing their work, are more likely to retain their surname upon marriage (Fox, 2010; Goldin & Shim, 2004; Ingraham, 1999). Therefore it is rather surprising that the bride in interview 9, who has a PhD degree and who has published her work, double-barrels her surname, instead of retaining it completely. Importantly, it should be noted that the research by Goldin and Shim (2004) and Ingraham (1999) was conducted in the USA, which might suggest a more liberal perspective on changing surnames. Bearing in mind that the current research has been conducted in South Africa with predominantly South African participants it could be expected that belief systems on gender equality are more sexist and therefore less gender equal (Glick et al., 2000; Hasse, 2015). Consequently, when analysed contextually, the bride's motive to double-barrel her surname can be seen as more progressive within the context of South Africa, whereby the norm would be for

the bride to change her surname to that of the groom. This is evident on the marriage certificate which is submitted by a marriage officer to the department of home affairs within South Africa (see Appendix 4). With regards to surname details, on the certificate only the husband's 'surname' is requested, whereas the wife's 'maiden name' and 'present surname' are required. This presents a clear example of how the existing institutional arrangements provide a gender unequal framework, which hinders the deviation from this norm and thus gender equality.

Inequalities are far more difficult to notice when viewed against the backdrop of cultural norms. Perhaps a variation of Hofstadter's (1986) technique can illuminate the bias within the dialogue of extract 21 more clearly. In his paper Hofstadter (1986) eloquently and humorously exchanges gendered terms with race terms to illustrate the sexist nature of everyday language. He replaces the word 'man' with that of 'white' and the word 'woman' with the word 'black'. The result is a shockingly biased description of racial interactions in society. Through the reading of Hofstadter's (1986) paper it appears that racial comments are identified as racism with greater sensitivity than what gendered comments would be identified as sexism. For example, Hofstadter (1986) satirically discusses the idea when black people are employed by white people. He explains that the black person must change their occupational name to that of the white person's name, to indicate whom they are associated with. This could instantly be seen as racist behaviour, whereby part of the black person's identity is replaced by the white person's identity; yet, the parallel here is intended to be drawn to women changing their surnames to that of their husband's once they are married, which is not necessarily viewed as sexist (see extracts 18, 20 & 21) (Kleinman, 2002). Similar to this technique, if the genders of male and female, and not the race, in the extract above were switched, would the prejudiced talk become more noticeable? For example, reading the extract as follows introduces a new dimension to the talk:

Extract 21b, Amended from Interview 9, Lines 934-956

| 934 | Interviewer: | Did either of you change your surname? |
| 935 | *Bride*: | Oh, ja, it's a compromise |
| 936 | *Groom*: | I changed my surname, double-barrelled it, the only reason I didn't |
| 937 | | take *her* surname is because I have a PhD degree and I've published |
| 938 | | some papers under my name, so I thought just career wise keeping my |
| 939 | | surname would make people, suddenly if you have a completely |
| 940 | | different surname they don't know it's the same person. So I don't |
| 941 | | know if that was stupid or not, because now it's a very long surname, |
| 942 | *Bride*: | Well it's only four little letters, I guess my surname is quite long |
| 943 | *Groom*: | I'm used to it, I don't even think about it any more |
| 944 | Interviewer: | [to *bride*] May I ask why you didn't change? |
| 945 | *Bride*: | Ja, I never gave it some thought |
| 946 | *Groom*: | *Mrs*. [says *his* surname-*her* surname] [laughs] |
| 947 | *Bride*: | [laughs] It just never even occurred to me, I've got to be honest, the |
| 948 | | funniest thing being with [*him*] having this double-barrel I've just retained |
| 949 | | my surname, but I sometimes get referred to with the double-barrel |
| 950 | | surname and I think it's quite funny, but ja it just simply never occurred |
| 951 | | to me and yet it wasn't a problem, I wasn't insistent that [*he*] had to |
| 952 | | change *his* name, it wasn't an issue, I understood um the reasons |
| 953 | | behind it and I was quite happy um it was a compromise |
| 954 | *Groom*: | But I always wanted to, I could have just retained my surname, but I |
| 955 | | always wanted to somehow have *her* surname so that was the decision |
| 956 | | and also I like *her* surname |

The absurdity of such a dialogue is obvious. Generally one would not encounter a groom having to justify what he did or did not do with his surname and similarly, one would not hear a bride stating that she had never given the changing of her surname any thought (Suarez, 1997). Through this somewhat odd example the rigidity of the patriarchal system in which we function is blatant (Kleinman, 2002). An alternative to this system

almost seems impossible. Perhaps more of these gender conversions of everyday talk are required, whereby male terminology is replaced by female terminology and vice versa, to identify inequalities in talk and actions more clearly. Accepted and taken-for-granted gender roles allow the original dialogue of extract 21a to be normalised and rendered doable (Jost, 1995).

The following extract is included in this section, because it introduces a new perspective. It illustrates clearly how one couple deviates from the norm with regards to the changing of surnames. Neither the bride nor the groom changed their surnames. Despite this the couple's awareness of an entrenched system and what is expected of them within this system, a deviation from the traditional practice of the bride changing her surname comes to the fore.

Extract 22, Interview 8, Lines 629-653

629     Interviewer: And did either of you change your surnames?

630     Groom:      [She] decided to keep her surname, she did ask me if I was ok with it and

631                 I did say I am, I think that's part of not sticking with traditions, although

632                 I feel a bit strange when people, when we normally tell people, because

633                 in this country it's not done often and when it is done people quickly

634                 defend it "oh, it's because I'm a doctor" or not because it's a purely

635                 personal decision, so ja

636     Bride:      So my one friend the one that had to be at the wedding, the school

637                 friends think it's very strange, even though the one is also an

638                 educational psychologist she's got you know, the other one's a teacher

639                 and she's very traditional the educational psychologist isn't so

640                 traditional, but she was very traditional about that, she wouldn't believe

641                 I kept my name, but when I told my cousin on Sunday she said "oh ja, all

642                 my friends have their own names", I said to [him] if we have kids I'll change

643                 my name, because otherwise with kids it gets a bit complicated

| 644 | Interviewer: | Ok, ok, how is that for you, it sounds like you actually have to defend |
| 645 | | now |
| 646 | Bride: | Ja I actually I am I feel I do have to defend my decision, which I think |
| 647 | | is a bit frustrating, because why do I have to change my name? Why can't |
| 648 | | he change his name? It's still a very male dominated thing, which |
| 649 | | irritates me a bit |
| 650 | Groom: | And that's why I feel bad, because everyone who we explain it to |
| 651 | | doesn't accept it um like some of my friends said "well if she was |
| 652 | | marrying me I would make her change it" |
| 653 | Bride: | Obviously I wouldn't marry them |

The couple is aware that with the bride not changing her surname to the groom's surname they are behaving in a manner that challenges the norm. The groom is the first one to explain that the bride had asked him for permission to change her name, which he consented to. He positions himself in a role of gatekeeper where he has the power and agency to consent to this, in the South African context, somewhat unusual practice (Goldin & Shim, 2004). He identifies that he feels "strange" (line 634) when he is called upon to account for why the bride kept her surname and adds that in South Africa women do not often retain their surnames. The groom is suggesting that the bride and he are accountable to others, whereby there is a need to defend and justify their decision. He portrays that this is not a decision that is simply met, but rather one that requires a great deal of explaining in the presence of other people. The bride also explains how friends and family members had mixed responses to her not changing her surname. It appears that "the social pressure for women to change their names upon marriage has lessened, but still exists" (Goldin & Shim, 2004). Although the bride challenges the taken-for-granted practices she, however, consents to changing her surname to that of the groom when the couple has children, because she states that "otherwise with kids it gets a bit complicated" (line 643). Interestingly, despite this compromise the bride proposes to make she challenges the notion that she needs to

defend her decision when she asks "why can't [the groom] change his name?" (lines 647-648). She introduces the idea that women changing their surnames is a "very male dominated thing" (line 648), which implies that she is aware that she is functioning within a patriarchal ideology. The bride identifies that because she is a woman it is expected of her that she changes her surname, yet these expectations do not apply to the groom because he is a man (Kleinman, 2002).

Instead of feeling content with their decision, the groom says that he feels "bad" (line 650) about their deviation from the norm, because it is not accepted by some of his male friends. This introduces a dimension of what it means to be masculine and perhaps how by being masculine around other males the groom is accepted more (Lindegger & Quayle, 2009; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). The hostile sexism expressed by the groom's friends when they state that they would "make" (line 652) or, put more plainly, force their bride to change her name again alludes to the existence of a rigid patriarchal system (Glick et al., 2000). In response, the bride expresses agency and a disapproval of the hostile sexist comment when she replies "obviously I wouldn't marry them" (line 653). Surprisingly, in spite of the strong opposition and backlash from friends of the bride and the groom to the bride keeping her surname the bride exercises her agency and to a large extent resists the favourable implications of justifying the system (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). This extract illustrates that when couples deviate and wish to go against sexist and taken-for-granted norms and rituals they are at times met with resistance. The groom expresses his unease and discomfort with this, while the bride expresses her frustration at having to defend her decision. This suggests that making wedding and marriage related decisions that go against gendered norms may enhance the couple's psychological distress, rendering the use of system justification a viable option to alleviate this distress and minimise backlash (Jost et al., 2003).

### 7.3.6 Conclusion

Various authors (for example, Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jackman, 1994; Jost & Kay, 2005) have noted that women may find favourable, communal traits of themselves flattering and are therefore encouraged "into active cooperation with a patriarchal system" (Jost & Kay, 2005, p. 499). To some degree women are thus duped into colluding with a system that does not benefit them, because they are not aware of the implications of these traits. A clear example of this is seen in extract 11 whereby the bride is strongly encouraged by the groom to comply with the expectation that her family holds of her being a princess at the couple's wedding. Since the fairy-tale discourse is flattering by constructing the bride as a princess, the bride has an even greater motivation to comply with the tenets of this discourse, thus encouraging her subordination (Sniezek, 2005). Rudman and Heppen (2003) have mentioned that fairy-tales "teach members of "the fairer sex" to put aside their own ambitions and reap rewards indirectly, through men" (p. 1357). This in turn prevents women's progress in society and maintains patriarchy.

When viewed through a system-justifying lens the discourse of the fairy-tale wedding represents a flattering system that is so well entrenched that women, or more specifically brides, as a subordinate group are unlikely to change this (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). It seems therefore that to provide psychological relief for themselves in their disadvantaged position it is necessary to justify the unchangeable discourse (Jost et al., 2003). The social and psychological consequences of the bride's day and fairy-tale wedding discourses are no longer innocuous when the use of these discourses expresses a system-justifying function. The consequence of these discourses is that inequalities can be justified to the extent where it appears that the disadvantaged group in fact benefits from the social arrangement (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). In relation to the discourses, brides position themselves in such a way as to give the impression that they are the benefactors, whereas grooms position themselves passively so that it seems that they have no choice in the wedding planning (Sniezek, 2005).

In conclusion, the positive and flattering discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding, as well as the love and consideration expressed by the grooms throughout the interviews, allow brides and grooms to justify gender inequalities to the extent where the discourses enable system justification and the maintenance of the status quo. This is noted in this section through the performance of traditional wedding practices and rituals, such as the bride and groom justifying the gender unequal distribution of labour, the groom's lack of involvement in the wedding planning, the father of the bride giving her away to the groom and brides changing their surnames upon marriage.

## 7.4   The Palliative Effects of System Justification Theory

### 7.4.1   Introduction

If by participating in the white wedding brides (a) objectify themselves, (b) engage in a greater proportion of the wedding planning than grooms, (c) change their identity through the changing of their title and surname after marriage and (d) display themselves in gender stereotypical attire and a gender stereotypical manner, which encourages further gender stereotypical treatment and benevolent sexism, why then would women participate in this ritual and consequently justify an unequal social system and their disadvantaged position? Throughout this research the question of how and why women support existing social arrangements through their white wedding, despite these social arrangements ultimately not being within their interests as a group, has been asked. There is certainly a strong motivation for why women would engage in system justification and participate in this gender unequal ritual (Jost & Banaji, 1994). This section of the analysis explores one aspect of what might motivate women to actively participate in and encourage the traditional white wedding, namely, the powerful effect of palliation.

### 7.4.2   The Palliative Effects of System Justification Theory

Jost and Hunyady (2002) argue that "people engage in system justification (and other forms of rationalisation) in order to cope with and adapt to unjust or unpleasant realities that appear to be inevitable" (p. 146). They explain that this psychological need of coping and adapting occurs in three ways. First, people choose to believe that existing social arrangements are predictable and fair. These beliefs in turn serve to prevent stress. Second, through system justification people believe that they have a sense of control over existing social arrangements, which helps people cope with the prevailing

situation. Third, to deal with the unequal consequences of being a member of a disadvantaged group system justification can be employed as a coping response. To summarise, people attempt to deal with an unequal and uncontrollable social arrangement by engaging in system justification, which in turn serves to create a sense of control. This sense of control is enabled by supporting existing ideologies, such as paternalism, sexism or patriarchy.

System-justifying ideologies, such as paternalism or benevolent sexism, have positive and soothing functions "in that they reduce anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty for those who are advantaged and disadvantaged" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 111). This largely explains the allure of system justification. Research has suggested that by justifying the existing social arrangements individuals create a sense of control for themselves, which in turn has a positive psychological effect for disadvantaged groups (Jost et al., 2003; Jost, Wakslak & Tyler, 2008). For example, for women benevolent sexism has been shown to increase satisfaction with life (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Consequently, women may be more likely than men to accept their own disadvantaged situation (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). By engaging in system justification women, first, convince themselves that the existing social arrangements are fair and legitimate and, second, feel more content with their position in the social order (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). This important and significant alleviating function occurs when women justify gender inequality through system-justifying processes, which consequently reduce ideological dissonance in favour of the existing social arrangements (Jost, 2011). The manner in which this is done is analysed here with a particular focus on the palliative effect that system justification has when brides talk about gender differences in the practices of wedding planning, walking down the aisle and giving a speech. Clearly, as an outcome of these practices unequal social arrangements are maintained; however, do brides, as part of the subordinate group of women, manage to successfully rationalise and justify their behaviours through their interaction with the interviewer so as to serve a palliative function? If done successfully

the palliative function of system justification would encourage coping for the brides, and bolster and support the status quo.

### 7.4.3 The Wedding Planning and Complementary Gender Roles

The status quo is maintained through the rationalisation and justification of ideologies (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). This is problematic, because ideologies present a distorted view of reality, which may in turn encourage a *false consciousness* (Fox, 1999; Jost & Burgess, 2000). The white wedding functions as such an ideology, through which existing forms of gender unequal social arrangements are legitimised and maintained (Ingraham, 1999). Within this *white wedding ideology* complementary gender roles and paternalism in the form of benevolent sexism are transmitted. This socialises brides and grooms into recreating the white wedding and reproducing unequal gender relations. Benevolent sexism is particularly effective in maintaining these complementary gender roles and consequently gender inequality (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

As discussed in the literature review, benevolent sexism encourages paternalism towards women (Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Benevolent sexism favourably suggests that women are gentle beings and should be protected and cared for by men (Glick & Fiske, 1997). In contrast to this favourable aspect, benevolent sexism also suggests that women are the weaker sex (Viki et al., 2003). By complying with treatment which is characteristic of a paternalistic ideology, women welcome flattering and protective treatment, but simultaneously encourage their own subordination and oppression (Jost & Kay, 2005). Consequently, accepting this flattering treatment may encourage the acceptance of inequality (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). In addition to this, the acceptance of a paternalistic ideology may be linked to a greater acceptance of complementary gender roles (Napier et al., 2010). Thus, believing that women are gentle beings that must be protected encourages the stereotypical belief, for example, that the role of a woman is to be a homemaker and caregiver, while the role of a man is to be a breadwinner. This

represents a gender unequal situation since the roles of homemaker-caregiver and breadwinner are associated with significant discrepancies and inequalities in social status and rewards (Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Similarly, in the wedding the gender differences in the wedding planning and the performance of specific traditions, such as the bride being walked down the aisle and the groom giving a speech, are indicative of such practices that encourage inequalities in social status and rewards. Despite these inequalities, research suggest that the paternalism expressed in such practices serves a soothing function for women (Jost & Kay, 2005). The psychological motives of these practices and their palliative effects are explored in the extracts that follow.

In extract 23 the complementary gender roles of the bride and the groom during the wedding planning come to the fore. The bride and groom have distinct roles which prescribe which tasks they would complete. The manner in which the bride speaks about her tasks normalises and justifies why she completed most of the wedding planning.

Extract 23, Interview 7, Lines 170-192

| 170 | Groom: | And the nice thing, while she was doing all the shopping and picking |
| 171 | | out of small stuff I then had time to make sure I get stuff like the |
| 172 | | accommodation the honeymoon all of that sorted |
| 173 | Interviewer: | So you were responsible for honeymoon? |
| 174 | Groom: | Yes. I tried to keep her in the dark [Interviewer laughs] |
| 175 | Interviewer: | Ok, why did you decide to do that, you doing the honeymoon, you |
| 176 | | not being involved? |
| 177 | Groom: | She likes surprises, so |
| 178 | Bride: | And I knew about everything |
| 179 | Groom: | Then the other thing |
| 180 | Bride: | The one thing that could be a surprise for me was the honeymoon |
| 181 | Groom: | And then my uncle came to me and said he's got a lot of RCI points at |

| 182 | | [place] if we would like to go to the [place], that was actually |
| 183 | | something I had in mind, because I've never been to that side before |
| 184 | Bride: | And we discussed the idea of going to the [place] at some point |
| 185 | | in our lives |
| 186 | Groom: | So that was the only thing where I could make her think that we were |
| 187 | | going to the other side of the world, get all of that sorted |
| 188 | Bride: | It almost came naturally that he would do that bit while I do the |
| 189 | | wedding decisions |
| 190 | Interviewer: | Ok, did that work well? |
| 191 | Bride: | Very well |
| 192 | Groom: | Yes |

Although the groom planned the honeymoon, throughout the interview the couple elaborate that the bride engaged in a greater proportion of the wedding planning than the groom. Earlier in the interview the bride explains "[he] said he'll just leave that [the planning] over to me" (line 141). The bride describes the allocation of roles as natural (line 188). This explanation serves to defend why she completed most of the wedding planning and consequently by explaining that the distribution of wedding work "came naturally" (line 188) she rationalises the unequal distribution of the wedding work. While explaining that the unequal distribution of work "came naturally" (line 188) the bride is able to eliminate any questions of what is and what is not an equal and a fair distribution of wedding work. The explanation of tasks as natural and complementary enables an acceptance of their limited capacity to alter the status quo (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Interestingly, even in more gender egalitarian societies the endorsement of complementary gender roles serves to make these inequalities bearable in that it reduces ideological dissonance (Napier et al., 2010). A paternalistic ideology, which comes through in the extract above with the groom implying that he considerately took on the greater tasks, softens the gender inequality and supports this soothing function, because it allows women to accept their fate as homemakers and caregivers, and in this

instance wedding planners (Jost & Kay, 2005). In addition to this, wedding planning work is generally considered to be women's work (Sniezek, 2005). This suggests that this kind of framework would be resistant to change and by explaining and constructing the distribution of labour as natural and complementary, the bride creates a sense of control, which would support her ability to cope with an unequal status quo (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Therefore, complementary gender roles endorsed by the bride and the groom have comforting effects for women and men; however, they continue to maintain these unequal social arrangements (Napier et al., 2010).

In the following extracts the interviewer questions taken-for-granted traditions. In response the bride and groom account for and defend specific practices. The defensive response (see line 1265) enables a reassuring function, because it justifies the couple's practices and thereby it could be surmised that it reduces "anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 111). The taken-for-granted nature of the bride engaging in most of the wedding planning is strongly defended by the bride in the following extract.

Extract 24, Interview 1, Lines 1262-1276

1262   Interviewer: You were just mentioning that you did, um, [the groom] and you were
1263             mentioning that you did most of the planning. Um how did that come
1264             about? Was it decided on?
1265   Bride:     Nah, it was just practicality of it, it was the fact that if I need
1266             something Scottish, Scottish ribbon I'd obviously speak to my mum
1267             about it em, em, the thistles that I was going to use, because I couldn't
1268             find any thistles here, so my mum brought some fake thistles that we
1269             incorporated in the real flowers, so I'd have to speak to my mum about
1270             that, so there were a lot of things where I sort of just took on the role,
1271             because it was just practical. I'd just speak to my mum about it or a
1272             friend or whoever about it. So I think we just took on the roles that I

| 1273 | think we knew we could do. It wasn't that we had decided that we knew |
| 1274 | who was doing what, it was just as we went along what needed done |
| 1275 | and I would say "look, I need to do this, em, what do you think about it" |
| 1276 | and he'd say "ok, it's fine" then we would decide how it would be done. |

Based on the bride's response "nah, it was just practicality of it" (line 1265) it is likely that the bride hears the interviewer's comment and questions as potential criticism. This would in turn shed light on the bride's need for a defensive response. Earlier on in the interview the interviewer asks the couple if the planning of the wedding was equal, to which the groom responds "I'd say you did more than me" (line 1248), the bride agrees "I did do more than you" (line 1249). Although the unequal distribution of work during the wedding planning between the bride and the groom is perhaps not as evident in the extract above, by the time the bride explains the nature of the planning in this extract it is clear that the couple has established that the bride engaged in more of the wedding work than the groom. Despite the obvious inequality the bride explains that this was "just practical" (line 1271). The bride cites the necessary contact with her mother to obtain certain decorations for the wedding as a reason as to why she completed most of the wedding planning. The elaborate explanation provided by the bride detracts from the gender unequal nature of the wedding planning and rather focuses on rationalising why the bride engaged in more of the wedding planning than the groom. The explanation provides a reason and justification as to why the wedding planning was unequally distributed. Based on how wedding labour is generally distributed between women and men it is unlikely that the groom would have taken on an equal or a greater portion of the wedding planning work compared to the bride (Sniezek, 2005). In response to this unequal status quo the bride gives an extensive argument, which serves to validate, rationalise and justify why she engaged in most of the wedding planning and thus provides an explanation for the unequal division of labour. This consequently creates the perception that the bride has a choice in how the wedding work is distributed and as a result the perception of the bride's control is

created. In both extracts 23 and 24 the brides illustrate that the unequal distribution of wedding work was uncontested; "it came naturally" (extract 23, line 188) and it was "practical" (extract 24, line 1271). This suggests that the brides' justifications and their encouragement of the gender unequal nature of the wedding planning serve to reduce perceptions of inequality and thus assist in making these inequalities bearable (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

In the following extract the interviewer asks about gender roles on the wedding day to which the groom replies that they had a "very un-gender-roled wedding" (line 746). In response the bride openly disagrees with this statement by the groom and defends her own engagement in the wedding planning.

Extract 25, Interview 5, Lines 743-758

| 743 | Interviewer: | Is there anything else you can tell me about your wedding day? |
| 744 | | Anything you think might be of interest to me? Anything related to |
| 745 | | perhaps gender roles? |
| 746 | Groom: | It was very un-gender-roled wedding I think |
| 747 | Bride: | Well I think my mum and me did most of the work, well, pre the |
| 748 | | wedding and then on the day my dad tends to be very good, practical |
| 749 | | support |
| 750 | Groom: | After we had that thing at your house, I can't remember what we did |
| 751 | | that evening. I can remember going back to check on [baby]. The wedding |
| 752 | | day itself, I remember the wedding, I remember eating at your parents' |
| 753 | | house, but after that I don't remember nothing |
| 754 | Bride: | Yeah, gender roles, mmm. Just like I said that my mum and me did |
| 755 | | most of the preparation for it |
| 756 | Groom: | I did very little |
| 757 | Bride: | Partly because you weren't there. It's not your thing to think about |
| 758 | | flowers and napkins |

Although the groom explains that their wedding was a "very un-gender-roled wedding" (line 746), the bride disagrees and mentions that she and her mother were more involved in the wedding planning than the groom. The groom diverts from the topic of gender roles, perhaps to avoid further exposure of his disengagement; however, the bride reverts back to this topic when she says "yeah, gender roles, mmm. Just like I said that my mum and me did most of the preparation for it" (lines 754-755). The groom then agrees that he "did very little" (line 756) for the wedding preparations. At the groom's admission of his lack of involvement the bride softens her stance and elaborates that the groom was not present and that it is not his "thing to think about flowers and napkins" (lines 758). By explaining the groom's lack of involvement in terms of natural and complementary gendered preferences the bride is able to rationalise the unequal division of labour (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

Later on in the interview the bride again refers to the wedding preparations and says "there was a gender difference between how the wedding would have been without women's touch" (lines 814-816). The bride rationalises that there is something special about a woman's touch and that this is important and necessary in the wedding planning. She implies that there is a difference in a woman versus a man's touch. This also explains why the bride was more involved in the wedding preparations. This explanation of having "women's touch" (line 816) in the wedding supports the notion of complementary gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 2001). This serves to soften and rationalise the unequal distribution of wedding work between the bride and groom. The extract illustrates the distribution of labour according to gender roles and by considering the influence of gender roles and the benefits of having a woman's touch the bride is making a case for why she "did most of the work" (line 747).

In the extracts above the brides motivate why they engaged in most of the wedding planning. Because it is the disadvantaged group of brides that justifies the unequal distribution of wedding work, the motivation provided prevents judgement regarding

gender inequality and as such the brides are able to alleviate discomfort that may arise from such insinuations (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). To alleviate any psychological distress from this clearly unequal arrangement these brides, as noted above, would justify that the existing arrangements are natural, fair and necessary (Carvallo & Pelham, 2006). Previous research suggests that by justifying the status quo women are not only alleviating discomfort for themselves, but such justifications also improve life satisfaction in the short-term (Napier et al., 2010). Therefore the benefits of justifying unequal social arrangements that are resistant to change are high and may consequently be fuelled by a strong motivation to experience these benefits, rather than the backlash that may be a possible response to women who oppose the status quo (Rudman & Glick, 2001). If, as Jost and Hunyady (2002) propose about system-justifying ideologies, these brides are able to "reduce anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort and uncertainty" (p. 111) by justifying and rationalising why they engaged in a greater proportion of the wedding planning, then the comforting effects of supporting the status quo are even greater and thus more desirable for women.

### 7.4.4  The Bride being walked down the Aisle

In the following two extracts the brides rely on the explanation of tradition as a system-justifying function of why the bride is walked down the aisle by her father. By labelling why they walked down the aisle as a 'tradition' the agency is taken away from the brides, so that they do not have to actively decide what meanings this tradition may hold or whether or not they even want to perform this practice. Because this tradition is taken-for-granted it is preformed regardless. The explanation of tradition suggests that the bride was compliant and performed an action that was expected of her.

Extract 26, Interview 1, Lines 1038-1041

1038   Interviewer:  [to the bride] did you walk down the aisle?

1039   Bride:        Yes, with my dad.

1040    Interviewer: Why did you do that?

1041    Bride:          Tradition. Also because I wanted to.


In the brief extract above the bride explains that she walked down the aisle because of tradition. In this instance the framework of tradition is a response that justifies why the bride engaged in a particular practice. It is a simple and straightforward answer that is intended to be self-explanatory. Within the framework of the white wedding it is an accepted common practice for the bride to be walked down the aisle by her father to be given to the groom (Geller, 2001). Because this practice is so widely accepted, what is, perhaps, the most unusual in the extract above is that the bride is even asked by the interviewer why she walked down the aisle. A taken-for-granted practice is questioned and the response implies that the practice is taken-for-granted. Therefore it does not make sense for the interviewer to question this. The interviewer's questioning (lines 1038 & 1040) challenges an accepted practice and may therefore be perceived as critique. Through this system-justifying answer the bride relieves herself of all responsibility with regards to why she engaged in this particular practice. It is also understood that due to the bride's compliance in this patriarchal tradition she is encouraging her subordinate role through paternalism and benevolent sexism (Rudman & Glick, 2001). As mentioned earlier, this paternalistic treatment has favourable consequences for women who are compliant with complementary gender roles (Viki et al., 2003).


The bride then shifts her position and adds that she also wanted to walk down the aisle. By introducing the claim that the bride also wanted to walk down the aisle she creates the perception that she was in control and that she had a choice in whether or not she performed this particular tradition. The introduction of the bride's agency serves to illustrate that, although the bride complied with taken-for-granted expectations, she also chose to do so. By mentioning "also because I wanted to" (line 1041), the bride constructs herself as agentic. She indicates that she holds traditions in high regard, but

is not at the mercy of these traditions. In this extract both the mention of complying with existing social arrangements and the mention of choice serve a comforting function for the bride, because by justifying the practice from two angles her behaviour is spared of critique (Jost & Kay, 2005).

Similarly the bride in extract 27 also mentions the influence of tradition, but gives a more elaborate explanation of why her father walked her down the aisle. The groom shows his support by adding his thoughts about this tradition as well.

Extract 27, Interview 7, Lines 614-627

| 614 | Interviewer: | [to the bride] OK, um, did you get walked down the aisle? |
| 615 | Bride: | Yes, my dad walked me down the aisle |
| 616 | Interviewer: | Why did you do that? |
| 617 | Bride: | Um, because I've got a very, very strong bond with my dad and then |
| 618 | | I'm the only girl, I know everybody else's dad's do it as well. I think it's a |
| 619 | | dad's privilege of walking his daughter down the aisle to pass his |
| 620 | | authority over to the husband |
| 621 | Groom: | Yes, I think there's a beautiful, what do you call it, symbolic gesture of |
| 622 | | the dad saying "listen, she was under my wing up to now, I trust you |
| 623 | | enough to give my daughter up to you now" so that's the one thing at |
| 624 | | every wedding that I actually enjoy, is watching firstly the bride walking |
| 625 | | down with her dad and then the husband to be… |
| 626 | Bride: | …taking over |
| 627 | Groom: | Standing in front with anticipation of actually getting his wife |

In extract 27 the interviewer again asks why the bride walked down the aisle. The question itself requires an explanation. In response the bride's answer introduces the concept of a social hierarchy as an explanation. She first mentions that she has a "strong bond" (line 617) with her father and that she is her father's only daughter. She

acknowledges that despite being the only daughter and having a strong bond with her father, other fathers would also do this. The bride then mentions that the father walks "his daughter down the aisle to pass his authority over to the husband" (lines 619-620). She positions herself as subordinate and her father and groom as dominant. The gender inequality and the benevolent sexism in this explanation are blatant; yet, the bride and groom are not perturbed by this. The groom reinforces this when he describes this tradition as a "beautiful [...] symbolic gesture" (line 621). Despite the notion that this tradition, of the bride being walked down the aisle by her father and being given to the groom, reinforces a gender hierarchy, the bride and groom frame it in such a way as to appear meaningful and positive (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). This meaningful account and the paternalism and chivalry expressed towards the bride serve a system-justifying function by reinforcing complementary gender roles and minimising ideological dissonance for the couple (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). By depending and relying on positively framed traditions the bride avoids "potentially negative information" (Shepherd, 2012, p. 9) about this gender unequal practice, which would ultimately be disadvantageous to the bride. The mention of the father passing "his authority over to the husband" (lines 619-620) suggests a biblical discourse and as such the bride is able to experience relief that she conformed to her religious beliefs (Froschauer, 2014). Earlier on in the interview the groom mentions "we are both very religious" (line 600). Thus the various justifications by the bride and groom, which include references to biblical discourses, reduce ideological dissonance and alleviate potential psychological distress (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Willer, 2009).

### 7.4.5  Wedding Speeches

Traditionally it would only be men who give speeches in the white wedding (Geller, 2001). The speech-givers would include the groom, the best man and the father of the bride. Therefore, the giving of speeches by men is taken-for-granted and consequently

also expected. In the following extract the bride and groom negotiate and explain why the bride did not give a speech. They draw on notions of what is expected of the bride.

Extract 28, Interview 2, Lines 234-248

234    Interviewer: [to the bride] you didn't say a speech?

235    Bride:         No.

236    Interviewer: Was there a reason why you didn't?

237    Bride:         I've just never known brides to do speeches really.

238    Groom:        Yes. I've never heard a bride say a speech.

239    Bride:         Ja, maybe that was a tradition [laughs]. I can be quite loud, but in

240                   that sense…

241    Groom:        But on both families, no one ever said it once that she should say a

242                   speech.

243    Bride:         Yeah, no one ever mentioned, you know "you should say a couple

244                   of words", so it never actually came to mind.

245    Interviewer: Would you have liked to say a speech?

246    Bride:         Nah.

247    Groom:        I didn't.

248    Bride:         Maybe…you didn't want to, but you had to.

Unlike the previous extracts about the bride engaging in a tradition, extract 28 is about why the bride did not perform a certain ritual that the groom performs. The couple relies on wedding traditions and expectations within these traditions to justify why the bride did not give a speech. The bride and groom explain that they have never heard brides give a speech and that it was not expected for the bride to give a speech. By naming the taken-for-granted manner in which traditions are performed the couple is able to absolve themselves from any responsibility pertaining to the possibility that they may have been deviant in their wedding. The reliance on taken-for-granted traditions, which support complementary gender roles, with the bride as passive and the groom as

active, serves to soften the unequal gender roles and construct the gender roles as fair and legitimate (Jost et al., 2003).

In extract 29 the bride explains that the groom giving a speech is traditional and gives a reason for why she refrained from giving a speech. The explanation serves to fulfil a system-justifying function.

Extract 29, Interview 7, Lines 536-546

| 536 | Interviewer: | [to the groom] Did it feel like you had to say something specific? |
| 537 | Groom: | No, I think it was important for me to thank people and but no I didn't |
| 538 | | feel that there was anything |
| 539 | Bride: | I think although it is traditional to have the speeches and thank |
| 540 | | everybody he wanted to |
| 541 | Interviewer: | [to the bride] Ok, ok, and you didn't want |
| 542 | Bride: | Ach I didn't say anything, it's not that I didn't want to it's just that I, |
| 543 | | like he said now we didn't want to make it a big long issue then the |
| 544 | | same as before we didn't want to prolong unnecessary things and again |
| 545 | | we've been to weddings where they talk and talk and talk and you don't |
| 546 | | listen so it's no reasons… |

Similar to how the bride in extract 26 responds, this bride explains that a certain practice, namely the giving of a speech, forms part of a tradition and she goes on to mention that the groom also wanted to give a speech. The twofold explanation of tradition and desire suggests the fulfilment of expectations, while simultaneously emphasising their agency. When asked if the bride did not want to give a speech she responds by saying that it is not that she did not *want* to give a speech, but rather that she did not want to "prolong unnecessary things" (line 544). Evident in her response is the bride's need to portray herself in a positive light and her ability to defend why she did not give a speech (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). By incorporating time constraints as a

factor as to why she did not give a speech the bride is able to avoid any questioning and alleviate any discomfort regarding her lack of involvement in this stage of the wedding (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Shepherd, 2012). Lastly, the bride draws a comparison to other weddings "where they talk and talk and talk" (line 545). This comparison provides support for the bride's behaviour. By mentioning the time constraints and creating a perception of having control over the order of events the bride alleviates discomfort and portrays their wedding favourably.

Accepting and supporting the existing social arrangements, such as those traditions mentioned above, makes gender unequal traditions bearable, because when they are bearable women are not required to oppose a rigid ideology. The effects of inequality are softened through a process of justification and rationalisation (Harding & Sibley, 2013; Napier et al., 2010). However, the predictability of supporting and preserving existing social arrangements prevents the uncertainty of necessary social change (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Therefore, supporting and justifying an unequal ideology seems to provide greater certainty and comfort than trying to change an ideology that is unequal and resistant to change (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013).

Despite the perceived positive nature of the palliative function of system justification, research by Harding and Sibley (2013) has suggested that the effects of system justification differ in the short- and long-term. The short-term effects of system justification are soothing and appear to have a positive nature, while the long-term effects appear to be lower life satisfaction. Furthermore, palliation prevents social change from taking place and reproduces the unequal existing social arrangements (Becker & Wright, 2011). Consequently, although the short-term comforting effects of system justification seem positive, the negative implications of system justification's palliation should not be disregarded. This is incredibly problematic since the alleviating effects of system justification are experienced warmly and positively, which would

prevent social change and encourage further justification of the status quo (Hammond & Sibley, 2011).


### 7.4.6 Conclusion


Despite a number of gender unequal practices that form part of the white wedding, women continue to participate in, justify and encourage this traditional ritual. One possible explanation for this may be that by engaging system-justifying processes in support of the white wedding it gives the illusion that women are in control of their own fate. This sense of control in turn alleviates "anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 111), which enables a palliative function. Furthermore, the palliative function of system justification is an aspect of SJT that explains why gender equality as a form of social change is not easily achieved (Gaucher & Jost, 2011). By framing the abovementioned practices in positive and gender equal terms the couples – and perhaps especially the brides – prevent social change from taking place. The talk in the extracts suggests that a sense of relief is necessary when the taken-for-granted is questioned. Consequently, when the status quo is challenged palliation comes to the fore through interactions and discourse. Unlike previous research which has suggested that palliation is an effect of system justification (Jost & Hunyady, 2002), it is considered here that the defensive and rhetorical accounts by the brides in the extracts above serve a system-justifying purpose *because* this allows for the powerful effect of palliation to take root. In sum, it is suggested within the context of this research that system justification would not exist were it not for its palliative consequences.

Although the alleviating effects of system justification appear positive in that they reduce ideological dissonance, improve psychological well-being and increase life satisfaction in the short-term (Hammond & Sibley, 2011), the findings by Harding &

Sibley (2013) suggest that the long-term effects of system justification are not positive, instead there are "costs to this protective buffer that only become apparent over time" (p. 402). These long-term negative effects include decreased psychological well-being for individuals of the disadvantaged group, as well as the perpetuation of social inequality, due to the reluctance to pursue social change (Harding & Sibley, 2013). The negative psychological consequences on well-being of system justification in the long run still need further investigation and exploration.

In conclusion, the analysis of wedding related discourses demonstrates that gender inequality is perpetuated through the taken-for-granted discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding. These discourses are flattering, but prescriptive towards women, whereby they suggest which role women must assume in their wedding planning and how they should perform this role. By employing these discourses brides enable a psychologically comforting function and are thus able to justify their performance of specific gender unequal roles and practices. As already noted, the performance of these roles promotes system justification (Calogero & Jost, 2011).

# 8 Discussion

## 8.1 Introduction

This research has diverted somewhat from the traditional approaches to research on SJT, in that previous studies on SJT have predominantly been of a quantitative nature (see for example Jost, Kay & Thorisdottir, 2009). Instead, this qualitative research study has aimed to consider how dominant ideology is promoted through discourses related to the white wedding. The fairy-tale wedding discourse and the bride's day discourse, similar in its effects to the discourses of paternalism and patriarchy, have been identified as discourses that promote a system-justifying ideology (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). The white wedding as a system-justifying ideology is comprised of discourses that construct gendered roles for the bride and groom and later these translate into gendered roles for the wife and husband (Adams, 2007; Schweingruber et al., 2004). These gendered roles in turn privilege and benefit men and are disadvantageous to women (Finlay & Clark, 2003). The discourses that enable these gendered roles are a form of system justification. At the same time these discourses make inequalities palatable and subsequently encourage system-justifying behaviour.

## 8.2 Wedding Discourses as System Justification

The wedding industry has blossomed in recent years, with more and more brides-to-be pursuing their fairy-tale wedding (Heise, 2012; Ingraham, 1999). Weddings are important rituals in that they signify the transition of women and men from singlehood to coupledom. Weddings also mark an elevation in status, especially for women (Blakemore et al., 2005). Despite the striking increase in the pursuit of the fairy-tale wedding, even in other, non-Eurocentric cultures, the white wedding is characterised by a number of patriarchal practices (Ma, 2006; Tombaugh, 2009). Many of the patriarchal practices in white weddings that are noted in the literature review are identified as

sexist practices, in the first section of the analysis, that the participants performed. The couples that were interviewed subscribed to and performed the gender specific manner of, for example, the proposal, the wedding planning, the choosing wedding outfits, the giving away of the bride, the giving of speeches and the changing of surnames. Consequently the white wedding inconspicuously preserves gender unequal social arrangements through these practices. This research has considered the patriarchal nature of these white wedding practices and asked why women would eagerly participate in these rituals whereby gender norms and the performance of stereotypical gender roles are not favourable to them individually and as a group.

SJT provides a framework from which to understand why these traditional and patriarchal wedding practices continue to be resistant to change. The seemingly sacred nature of the white wedding renders it taboo to critique. This is reflected in the lack of research on the interface of gender inequality and white weddings (Kalmijn, 2004), as well as the participant's defensive justifications when asked about certain traditional practices that they performed or did not perform during their wedding. For example, the practice of the father of the bride giving her away to the groom is performed in most white weddings and is a traditional wedding ritual that is taken-for-granted and seldom, if ever, questioned (Ingraham, 1999). The patriarchal nature of this tradition is expressed with men exercising their authority and ownership over women by treating them like an object to be passed from father to groom (Lewis, 1997). However, eight out of ten brides interviewed willingly engaged in and performed this ritual. This is suggestive of the importance that maintaining this ritual may hold for women and thus by performing this ritual women comply with what is expected of them. As such, by walking down the aisle the bride is keeping with traditions that are taken-for-granted and she thus avoids possible backlash that could result from noncompliance, deviance and overt rebellion (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Furthermore, this traditional practice affirms the bride. By engaging in this particular ritual the bride places herself at centre stage and consequently receives a great deal of admiration and positive attention.

Therefore the negative and positive aspects of conforming to gender unequal practices are noticeable. In addition to this, it is evident that the traditions that make up the system-justifying ideology of the white wedding are resistant to change.

Interestingly, the brides that performed the ritual of being walked down the aisle by their father to the groom also provided justifications and rationalisations as to why they were walked down the aisle when they were asked about this. For example, brides mentioned "it's a dad's privilege" (interview 7, lines 618-619), "well somehow I would have to get in there" (interview 4, line 336), "I thought everybody had to" (interview 2, line 493), "I guess it's a tradition, I didn't even give it any thought why I wouldn't do it" (interview 9, lines 313-314), "um, that is also a bit tradition and to involve [my dad] as well" (interview 3, line 760), "your dad gives you away to your husband um he gives you away to your husband and for everybody to see" (interview 10, lines 373-374) and "I wanted to" (interview 1, line 1041). Although a few brides expressed ambitions of gender equality (see for example extract 15 & 22) the pursuit of this was not noticeable amongst all of the brides. It is evident through the answers provided by the brides that almost any reason serves to justify and account for why they performed a certain practice. Consequently not much reasoning is needed for a response to have a system justifying function.

Another interesting paradox is noted with women enabling their own subordination by engaging in most of the planning for a wedding with rituals and practices that are patriarchal and, thus, not in their favour. The discourses of the fairy-tale wedding and the bride's day are positively framed towards the bride suggesting that the wedding is for and about the bride. Through the bride's participation and the groom's lack of involvement in the wedding planning the bride is able to construct her fairy-tale wedding. Because these discourses appear to be positive, flattering and in favour of the bride, the gender unequal distribution of wedding labour and the patriarchal nature of the white wedding itself is seemingly overlooked and simultaneously supported and

perpetuated. Consequently these commonly used discourses are representative of everyday language that promotes gender inequality.

Related to the fairy-tale discourse, the benevolent stereotypes of women as princesses in the white wedding encourage a warm and flattering view of women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). In assuming the role of princess the bride affords herself power and status (Sniezek, 2005). By supporting the view of the bride as the princess women also encourage their own life satisfaction, because they justify the gender unequal status quo and thereby reduce ideological dissonance (Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Consequently, constructing a fairy-tale wedding whereby the bride is the princess serves an affirming and flattering function for women. However, in justifying the status quo by supporting the fairy-tale discourse women also promote gender inequality through the encouragement of benevolent sexism (Jost & Kay, 2005). The more these benevolent stereotypes of women are mentioned and encouraged, the more women are encouraged to assume a greater proportion of the wedding planning work. This is in line with what Jost and Kay (2005) have found, namely, that the mere activation of complementary stereotypes is "sufficient to trigger increased support for the system" (p. 507). According to the brides and grooms in this research, the rationalisation of this is that the wedding is for the bride's sake and thus she should do the majority of the work. This indicates that these benevolent stereotypes of women as princesses serve a system-justifying function and are influential in endorsing the status quo and, thus, gender inequality by maintaining women's subordination (Jost & Kay, 2005; Rudman & Glick, 2001). In this research three possible explanations as to why women encourage and conform to the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding and thus bolster support for benevolent stereotypes and the existing social arrangements are plausible. These explanations are discussed below and include women's depressed sense of entitlement, out-group contact and the reduction of ideological dissonance.

## 8.3 Depressed Entitlement

Brides' perceptions of fairness and which tasks would be fair for their groom to complete during the wedding planning have a profound effect on how much these brides will plan for the wedding. It has been repeatedly noted in this study, as well as others, that women engage in a greater proportion of the wedding planning compared to men (Currie, 1993; Humble et al., 2008; Sniezek, 2005; Tombaugh, 2009). Women's harder work during the wedding planning may be indicative of this sense of fairness (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). As noted in the analysis, the discourses of the wedding being the bride's day and a fairy-tale, whereby the bride takes on the lead role as the princess, are engaged to normalise the unbalanced distribution of wedding work. When these taken-for-granted discourses are referred to it follows that the bride would complete more work for a wedding that is constructed as being for her and in her favour. In line with the effects of these discourses the groom's disengagement in the wedding planning would be constructed as considerate and generous towards the bride.

The construction of a perceived sense of fairness creates an illusion of equality (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). By constructing the unequal distribution of wedding work as fair and equal brides allude to their depressed sense of entitlement (O'Brien et al., 2012). However, this sense of entitlement is not perceived as depressed, because the bride's day and fairy-tale discourses encourage a sense that the wedding is favourable to the bride. Consistent with research on women's depressed sense of entitlement it can be deduced that brides would justify their own disadvantaged position (Jost, 1997; O'Brien et al., 2012). This is evident in the discourses that are used to normalise the distribution of labour and to construct an unequal distribution of wedding work between the bride and groom as fair and equal. The discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding thus activate system-justifying beliefs and support women's sense of depressed entitlement (O'Brien et al., 2012). By preserving this illusion of equality brides and grooms are in fact preserving the dominant ideology

and thus prevent gender inequality. This illusion of equality and "denying that injustice or disadvantage occurs" (Jost, 1995, p. 400) may in turn be indicative of a sense of *false consciousness*, which Jost and Banaji (1994) have aptly defined the "holding of false beliefs that are contrary to one's social interest and which thereby contribute to the disadvantaged position of the self or the group" (p. 3). The "holding of false beliefs" (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p. 3) is reflected in the illusion of equality that brides construct.

The unequal distribution of wedding planning work between the bride and the groom is not only limited to the wedding day and the wedding day preparations, which makes this unequal distribution of wedding work more problematic. Although this was not researched in this study, it could be expected that for couples who only live together once married the unequal distribution of labour during the wedding planning is a precursor for the unequal distribution of labour in household and childcare work during the marriage (Baxter, 2000; Dixon & Wetherell, 2004; Humble et al., 2008; Sniezek, 2005). It is also likely that couples who cohabit before marriage have already established an unequal distribution of household labour, consequently wedding planning may be structured similarly (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). This shows evidence of women's depressed sense of entitlement, whereby women take on a greater proportion of wedding, household and childcare work. Through this, women disadvantage themselves and it could be expected that within this disadvantaged position women will encourage their own feelings of inferiority and be less likely to negotiate a fair and equal distribution of labour (Leibbrandt & List, 2012). Women's depressed sense of entitlement thus serves a system justifying function by encouraging a gender unequal distribution of labour and thus prevents the pursuit of social change towards gender equality (Becker & Wright, 2011; Jost, 1997).

The practice of women changing their surname to their husband's surname once married, as nine out of the ten brides did, presents another tradition that is indicative of women's depressed sense of entitlement. One of the nine brides did not fully change

her surname, but adopted her husband's surname as a double-barrelled surname. By changing their surname women display a change in identity from being single to being married (Goldin & Shim, 2004). They also indicate their connection and affiliation to their husband. A surname points towards ownership and, therefore, through the changing of her surname a woman shows to whom she belongs. This surname change is expected of women, but not of men, suggesting the gender unequal nature of this practice. This tradition is the norm in South Africa, which is indicated in legal and institutional practices. As pointed out in Appendix 4, South African marriage certificates are prescriptive as to who would change their surname once married. On the marriage certificate a man is not given the option of changing his surname upon marriage, while it is implied through the indication of a "maiden name" and "present surname" under the section of the wife's particulars that a woman would change her surname upon marriage. The rigidity of the marriage certificate indicates a lack of support on an institutional level for gender equality. As this is a taken-for-granted and accepted practice women are less likely to pursue a gender equal option. Two brides who changed their surname mentioned during the interview that they were reluctant to do so. The brides stated "it was tough for me to give up my surname" (interview 10, line 468) and "[he] wants me to take his surname, I still don't know if I want to" (interview 1, lines 1303-1304). Despite their reluctance to change their surname it appears that they still conformed to this sexist practice, because both brides signed the *information and informed consent form* (Appendix 2) with their husband's surname. In both instances it is evident that the grooms were certain that they would not change their surname, whereas the brides displayed some hesitation with regards to keeping their surname. This suggests that if conscious effort is not employed in changing these traditional practices it is likely that the status quo will prevail. Conforming to the gender biased status quo suggests that even in the practice of changing their surname women indicate a depressed sense of entitlement. In sum, a number of traditional wedding practices encourage women's depressed sense of entitlement and are simultaneously encouraged by women's already existing depressed sense of entitlement. This indicates that

weddings are resilient conduits for the preservation of women's depressed sense of entitlement.

## 8.4  Out-group contact

The wedding ritual is an expression that supports heterosexual relationships and positive interactions between women and men (Montemurro, 2002; Oswald, 2000). This is evident with the close contact that brides and grooms share during their wedding planning. However, this may have negative consequences for women, because due to the positive interactions both brides and grooms are less likely to create relational conflict by opposing patriarchal wedding practices, since, opposing patriarchal wedding practices would rupture these positive interactions. Out-group contact between women and men creates affectionate bonds (Jackman, 1994), which is evident in the interview extracts presented in the analysis that indicate brides defending and justifying the grooms' lack of involvement in the wedding planning. In wedding planning especially, bonds between women and men are particularly affectionate and intimate as the engaged couple approaches their wedding with much excitement. As the wedding day draws near it is expected that the couple would display a united front. Sengupta and Sibley (2013) consider that "inequalities that exist in the context of relatively positive and intimate social relations between groups can be far more resistant to change than those born out of openly conflictual relations" (p. 1398). The wedding itself can be viewed as the crux of these "positive and intimate social relations" (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013, p. 1398) for women and men, whereby women are also motivated to be viewed favourably by men (Carvallo & Pelham, 2006). The perpetuation of gender inequality increases within the context of the white wedding, since the intergroup friendships and close contact between women and men justifies unequal relationships and creates a false sense of equality (Jackman & Crane, 1986; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009).

Through the intimate and affectionate contact between women and men, as they prepare for their wedding, out-group contact is strengthened. The result is that women's sense of their disadvantaged position in the existing social arrangements is decreased (Carvallo & Pelham, 2006). With a decreased sense of disadvantage women are less likely to engage in social action that would promote gender equality (Rudman & Heppen, 2003; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). At the same time, if women have intimate and affectionate contact with the out-group, opposing these sacred rituals would deem them as deviant. The implications of this deviance would be that women would experience increased relational conflict with the groom and suffer the negative effects of backlash (Rudman & Glick, 2001; Sniezek, 2005). This suggests that "under sexist ideology, women receive special privileges as long as they stay in line" (Fiske et al., 1999, p. 484).

Furthermore, the intimate contact that brides and grooms have during their wedding planning encourages complementary gender stereotypes. As noted in the analysis gender specific roles will be described as "natural" (extract 5b, line 861) and "automatic" (extract 11, line 1487), yet these roles are noticeably gender specific and gender unequal. These complementary gender roles are encouraged through benevolently sexist treatment, which undermines women and suggests that they are the weaker sex (Glick & Fiske, 2001). The bride's day and fairy-tale wedding discourses are particularly potent in promoting a benevolently sexist view, because these discourses encourage a paternalistic ideology of women as gentle beings (Cikara et al., 2009). This indicates that as out-group contact increases between brides and grooms during the wedding planning complementary gender roles and benevolent feelings towards women are encouraged. The implication of this is that the status quo is accepted and justified, and gender equality is prevented (Jackman, 1994).

Although this research cannot explicitly state that women show more gender stereotypical behaviour around men, the researcher noticed that two brides displayed

more pro-feminist views when the grooms were absent during the interview process. This was evident during the groom's absence in interview 2 when the bride said "I'm more the matriarch, I say what goes most of the time" (lines 828-829). This pro-feminist disclosure to the interviewer suggests the positive connection of the in-group contact that the bride and the female interviewer shared. The connection within the in-group contact is seemingly overridden when the groom returns and the bride displays views in favour of complementary gender roles. This further suggests the strong influence that positive contact with the dominant out-group has on women.

## 8.5  Ideological Dissonance

The gender unequal nature of the wedding planning is evident in the interviews with the brides in almost all cases performing most of the wedding work. As previously mentioned, the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding serve to justify and rationalise the unequal distribution of labour and thereby reduce ideological dissonance (Hammond & Sibley, 2011). The reduction of ideological dissonance is consequently a result of system justification. Through the reduction of ideological dissonance the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding help these couples to accept their limited capacity to change inequalities (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). These system-justifying discourses are likely to "reduce anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty for those who are advantaged and disadvantaged" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 111). Constructing and conforming to these wedding discourses creates a sense that the unequal distribution of wedding work is equal, fair and controllable. Furthermore by complying with the existing social arrangements these discourses do not only allow for an alleviating effect, but women also avoid backlash by not pursuing social change (Becker & Wright, 2011; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

The palliative effect of system justification also comes to the fore through benevolent sexism, whereby supporting benevolent sexism reduces ideological dissonance. Because

benevolent sexism maintains a flattering and favourable view of women, benevolent treatment towards women offers a soothing effect. The discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding are discourses that encourage benevolent sexism through the construction of the bride as the princess on her special wedding day. The flattering role of the princess softens the gender unequal practices of the wedding and thus the affirming nature of benevolent sexism in these discourses is noted (Jost & Kay, 2005). Brides may justify the gender unequal nature of the wedding and the wedding planning by assuming the benevolently sexist role of princess (Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Interestingly, research has shown that "in highly unequal contexts just about *any* justification of the gender hierarchy is associated with palliative consequences" (Napier et al., 2010, p. 416). This suggests an explanation as to why brides will use a variety of different justifications related to why they were, for example, walked down the aisle by their father. Some justifications included "it's a dad's privilege" (interview 7, lines 618-619), "well somehow I would have to get in there" (interview 4, line 336) and "I wanted to" (interview 1, line 1041). These justifications also indicate that palliation is evoked in social interactions whereby it becomes necessary to account for and justify certain behaviours. When the interviewer asks why the bride performed a certain practice it becomes necessary for the bride to justify her behaviour. It is plausible that these brides would not need to access the soothing effects of system justification if they were not asked for an explanation regarding the performance of these practices. However, by justifying their subservient practices in support of patriarchy they are afforded with further admiration and benevolent treatment (Fiske et al., 1999).

It is noteworthy that dissonance reduction and the soothing effects of system justification do not exist without negative consequences. By seeking the comforting benefits of system justification brides may encourage increased life satisfaction in the short-term, but a decreased life satisfaction in the long-term, due to their continuous experiences of living within their disadvantaged position (Harding & Sibley, 2013). For women system justification is also associated with decreased self-esteem and increased

depression and neuroticism (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Further negative consequences may be that as brides who conform to the benevolent role of 'the-bride-as-the-princess' they are likely to be stereotyped as warm, but not competent (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Hammond & Sibley, 2011). In addition to this, as previously mentioned, by engaging in system justification social change in the form of gender equality is hindered (Becker & Wright, 2011).

## 8.6  Implications

The current research has aimed to study how system justification is present in heterosexual white weddings, how system justification contributes towards the performance and reproduction of gender and how and why couples justify the inequality of the wedding ceremony through commonly used discourses. The palliative effect of system justification, which is evident in the bride's day and fairy-tale wedding discourses, suggests a possible answer. The effects of the psychological relief experienced appear to affirm that the brides have fulfilled expectations and thus these brides are able to reduce uncertainty and negative sanctions (Jost, Nosek & Gosling, 2008).

The findings of this study have shown that system justification is activated in social contexts when there is a need to defend, justify and rationalise the existing social arrangements. This becomes noticeable with the discourse analysis when the couples are asked to account for why they engaged in certain traditional wedding practices. The resultant account by the participants provides endorsement for gender unequal practices, whereby any opposition to the couple's behaviour is refuted. Palliation as a function of system justification is therefore not individualistic, but also functions within this social context. Consequently studies of discourse as a form of social interaction are likely to provide further insight into the palliative effects of system justification.

Benevolent sexism appears to be extremely powerful in providing a soothing effect. With regards to benevolent and hostile sexism, women cannot have one without the other. If women endorse benevolent sexism there is a strong likelihood that hostile sexism or a form of gender disadvantage will be present as well. To ensure their liberation and move from oppression it is up to women to advocate for social change. This can only be done if women resist the flattering and paternalistic attention they receive from men and instead choose to accept nothing less than gender equality. Because the wedding provides flattering and affirming attention and a higher status for women resisting the allure of this system is problematic for women (Blanton, George & Crocker, 2001).

Despite the many studies that have shown support for SJT, critique of SJT is also noted. The ideology of individualism suggests that individual behaviour is responsible for individual reward (Hayward & Kemmelmeier, 2007). SJT conflicts with the ideology of individualism, because as noted in this research, individuals might not pursue what is in their personal best interests, but rather what is in the best interest of the collective. In line with this "an essential attribute of collectivist cultures is that individuals may be induced to subordinate their personal goals to the goals of some collective" (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai & Lucca, 1988, p. 324). However, in contrast the notion of individualism suggests that individuals will prioritise personal goals. This research has indicated that even in Eurocentric cultures, which are more individualistic, system justification motives trump ego and group justification motives for women (O'Brien et al., 2012). One explanation for this may be that stereotypically women are believed to be more communal compared to men and consequently they pursue system justification with regards to gendered practices in favour of ego and group justification (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). From this perspective it could be expected that women would prioritise their relational needs above their personal needs and thus support existing social arrangements (Hennes et al., 2012). This further serves to encourage women's subordinate position (Napier et al., 2010).

SJT is a theory that contributes greatly to the understanding of how the unequal status quo is justified and reinforced. Rituals, such as the white wedding, are particularly effective in maintaining the status quo and therefore present ideal areas in which to study the effects of SJT. Because the ritual of the white wedding is taken-for-granted and taboo to critique, it is for the most part a good conduit of the status quo. Similarly, many rituals are reinforcers of gender unequal practices and should be analysed through a SJT lens to identify the damaging effects of system justification on subordinate groups.

## 8.7   The South African Context

It is imperative to take note of the social context in which the participants live in and in which the study was conducted. In many respects South Africa appears to be a gender egalitarian nation when compared to other African countries that are less gender egalitarian; however, research findings show that this is not the case (Glick et al., 2000; Hasse, 2015). Gender inequality is ripe within South Africa. As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, in South Africa gender inequalities still occur in areas such as constitutional rights, legislation on sexual harassment, political positions of power, labour force participation, remuneration and violence (Hasse, 2015). Considering the system-justifying nature of the discourses that are used by the couples in this research it could be expected that these discourses would perpetuate gender inequality further. In their research Glick and Fiske (2001) found that in South Africa women endorsed benevolent sexism more strongly than men. They suggest that this may occur due to high rates of hostile sexism, which encourages women to seek paternalistic protection from men in the form of benevolent sexism. Considering this, the taken-for-granted discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding would strongly preserve benevolent sexism and thus minimise any opposition to hostile sexism. This would in turn have a negative effect on positive social change.

It is unlikely that gender inequality will fully vanish if women continue to be enchanted by fairy-tale fantasies. Research suggests that romantic fantasies have a negative effect on women's pursuit of personal power (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). Unless the veil is lifted and the gender inequalities are exposed for what they are social change will not be forthcoming. Collective social action is required by women and men to change the status quo and construct a gender equal society (Dixon et al., 2012). This might mean that the pendulum of gender bias, which is still at a disadvantage to women, needs to swing to the other side, whereby collective action is mobilised so that the pendulum can eventually rest in the egalitarian middle. As Rudman and Glick (2001) have mentioned "women's uphill climb to equality may grow steeper before it becomes easier" (p. 759).

In this endeavour the importance of how language and discourses are used cannot be stressed enough. The taken-for-granted discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding create the perception that the wedding is considerately there for the bride, although she engages in most of the wedding planning (Sniezek, 2005). Furthermore, the use of these discourses prevents a gender equal situation in reality (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). As one research participant so aptly mentioned "fantasy is often nicer than reality" (interview 5, line 259). Despite this charming view of a fantasy wedding, participating non-consciously in this gender unequal ritual will only serve to hinder women's emancipation and social change within South Africa (Adams, 2007).

To create a greater awareness of gender inequality it would be beneficial to employ a variation of Hofstadter's (1986) technique of interchanging female and male terms, as seen in the analysis under 7.3.5 Changing Surnames. This would enable one to identify benevolent sexism and gender inequalities in talk and actions more clearly. This should also be considered on an institutional level, whereby legal documents, such as a South African marriage certificate (see Appendix 4) should, for example, provide a space for men to change their surname, similar to how women are given that option. Titles such

as 'Miss' and 'Mrs.' which portray women based on their relationship to a man and indicate women's level of status in society should be replaced by the less discriminatory terminology of 'Ms.'. Along this line it could also be argued why titles based on gender are even necessary, as identifications based on gender would result in gender biased perceptions and treatment.

## 8.8  Conclusion

By building on previous research, this study has considered the implications of what effect commonly used discourses to construct the white wedding may have on gender equality. White wedding discourses, such as the bride's day discourse and the fairy-tale wedding discourse, encourage the objectification of women and their treatment in a benevolently sexist manner, the unequal distribution of wedding labour between the bride and groom and ultimately the encouragement of women's subordination in heterosexual relationships. Participating in the flattering rituals of the white wedding may therefore have a negative effect on gender equality and women's emancipation (Adams, 2007).

Studies that incorporate a variety of different research designs to research SJT are needed to identify how system justification maintains gender inequality. Previous studies on SJT have predominantly employed quantitative research designs to measure the effects of system justification. Contrasted to these studies the current qualitative research has considered discourses related to the white wedding as having a system justifying function. This study emphasises the need to consider everyday language as a system-justifying mechanism and thus if discourses are not considered carefully they present an obstacle on the path to gender equality.

It is possible that the brides' depressed sense of entitlement enables the unequal distribution of wedding work (Baxter, 2000; Dixon & Wetherell, 2004; Sniezek, 2005). This depressed sense of entitlement may in turn encourage brides to believe that the unequal (and unfair) distribution of wedding work is in fact fair. As a result of this depressed sense of entitlement these brides would expect less for themselves and therefore engage in most of the wedding work. Constructing the unequal distribution of wedding work as fair could be a response to a depressed sense of entitlement. Other traditions, such as the bride being given away by her father to the groom and the changing of surnames, are also indicative of women's depressed sense of entitlement in the white wedding. Furthermore, through the close and affectionate contact of brides and grooms during their wedding planning brides encourage positive intergroup contact. The out-group contact between the bride and groom encourages complementary gender roles and thus benevolent sexism. Under this benevolently sexist notion women are viewed favourably by men if they conform to complementary gender roles (Fiske et al., 1999). However, the complementary roles of the bride and groom encourage gender unequal treatment to the disadvantage of the bride. To reduce any negative feelings related to the awareness of the disadvantaged position of the bride, she will be motivated to justify the unequal social arrangements. Through this justification ideological dissonance is reduced and a palliative effect is activated. The relieving effect of justifying the status quo encompasses benefits such as increased well-being and life satisfaction and the reduction of "anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty for those who are advantaged and disadvantaged" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 111; Harding & Sibley, 2013; Napier et al., 2010). Due to the benefits of this comforting effect the unequal social arrangements are no longer questioned. This ultimately prevents gender equality.

# 9 Limitations and Recommendations

A few limitations of this research are mentioned here, which have in turn limited the results of the study. These limitations present grounds on which further research can be conducted. Although this study focused on white heterosexual couples, it should be noted that if these demographics had been expanded the results would appear significantly different (Lenon, 2008). For example, because the white wedding privileges heterosexual relationships, especially those of white people, by researching the white weddings of, for example, black or homosexual couples a whole new dimension of inequality based on race and sexual orientation would have been introduced (Ingraham, 1999; Kiguwa, 2004; Oswald, 2000).

Furthermore, Kalmijn (2004) argues that "remarriage is less dramatic than first marriage […] because the transition to marriage has been experienced before" (p. 584). In the case of remarriage certain gendered practices may hold a different degree of importance compared to the importance they hold for first marriages (Baxter et al., 2009). Consequently, a similar research study with participants that are remarrying may show a greater deviation from traditions, since these may not be as important the second time around. For example, women who remarry may choose to marry in other colours besides white. Although the race, sexual orientation and first marriage status of the participants would have presented limited results, it is recommended that further research could be expanded along these dimensions and how they influence the white wedding.

The interviewer's gender undoubtedly influenced the content of the interviews and what the brides and grooms chose to mention (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). This influence became evident when brides became more outspoken as the grooms left the interview for a brief period of time. For example, in these moments two brides presented more liberal and pro-feminist views generally and specifically on the practice of changing

surnames. This became clear when, during the absence of the groom, the bride in interview 2 states "I'm more the matriarch, I say what goes most of the time" (lines 828-829). Similarly, the gendered language used by the grooms may have been tempered so as not to offend the interviewer, which is most likely seen in the benevolent terms used to refer to the bride and women in general. The same research with a male interviewer may have presented some different and interesting discourses.

This research used the participants' retrospective accounts of their wedding as data, which might be concerning as participants need to rely on their memory to recount their wedding. However, "most people remember their wedding well" (Kalmijn, 2004, p. 593), which suggests that retrospective data may in fact not lack significant detail. The memories also served as talking points so that the discourses of the white wedding could come to the fore, and therefore particular details of the actual wedding were not as important as how couples talk about their wedding. In line with the retrospective accounts of the wedding, the actual wedding practices were not studied through observation. Future ethnographic studies could contribute to research on how interactions between brides and grooms during their wedding planning and the wedding day are gender unequal.

Further studies would advance the field of wedding research by exploring the idea of cross-cultural weddings (Nelson & Otnes, 2005). As mentioned in the review of literature, practices in certain cultures maintain the traditional cultural wedding, while also supplementing this with a white wedding (Cheng et al., 2008; Goldstein-Gidoni, 2000; Lee et al., 2011; Ma, 2006; Thulo, 2013). It has been suggested that white weddings signify "symbols of success and prestige" (Ma, 2006, p. 64). The possible perceived need to conform to Eurocentric wedding practices would present an interesting research area, whereby system justifying functions, such as out-group contact with other cultures would also be present.

Although the data collection included wedding photographs of the couples, these were not analysed as data, but rather utilised as discussion prompts during the interview. (An explanation for this is given in 5.6 Data Analysis). Further research could employ a visual ethnographic study to analyse the photographs as a means of identifying the gendered nature in which wedding photographs are taken (Strano, 2006). These wedding photographs as a form of artefact are likely to contribute towards a system justifying function in terms of gender roles.

From a physiological perspective it would be interesting to identify what happens to a person physically when they reduce ideological dissonance through system justification. Research suggests that subjective well-being and life satisfaction is increased when people engage in system justification (Harding & Sibley, 2013; Napier et al., 2010). However, discovering what happens to a person physically, such as monitoring heart rate and the release of cortisol in the body as a response to stress, when they justify unequal social arrangements may shed more light on the palliative effects and possibly the physiological benefits of system justification.

This study, as far as the researcher is aware, presented the first of its kind, whereby the discourses that served system-justifying functions in the white wedding were analysed. Although the discourses of the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding that were identified in this research are pervasive and taken-for-granted, they promote system justification and should not be overlooked. Therefore, it is recommended that more qualitative studies in the field of SJT should be conducted to identify how everyday practices enable and support gender inequalities within the status quo.

# 10 Reflexive Epilogue

Over the last few years, during the writing of this thesis, I have been asked many times what the topic of my PhD research is on. Most of the time I struggle to answer this question. The white wedding is sacred and a critique thereof is offensive and taboo. So as not to offend anyone, especially close friends who have had their own white wedding and whose wedding I have attended, I usually begin with the preamble: "Well, it's not everyone's cup of tea". I then uncomfortably proceed to give a shallow explanation, hoping that this will end the topic of conversation. The explanation is something along the lines of "gender roles in weddings". Much to my horror, this only sparks a greater interest. As I begin to explain how women enable their own subordination through the white wedding my discomfort grows: I am aware that I am touching on something sacred. I fear that I am offending people who are important to me. Consequently, I have noticed how when I explain my research to women I sugar-coat it. Women often find the idea of my research threatening…and why wouldn't they? When a significant core belief that we base so much of ourselves on is shaken we try to disprove what we fear makes sense. It is this fear and the fear of offending others that is most dangerous, because it prevents social change from taking place. Interestingly, it is my fear of offending others that allows me to have the greatest empathy with my research participants, because I am able to understand the social scripts that restrict their discourses and thus their behaviours.

Throughout the research process I have been aware of my personal bias. I am aware that my bias affects the interpretation of what the participant has actually said (Kohler Riessman, 1987). This bias was certainly influenced by the experience of some frustration towards the majority of the women in my study. They were passive brides – not questioning, not confronting, not challenging, just following and conforming to the script of the white wedding. It seems that few women would want to give up the positive attention, status and admiration that they receive on their wedding day.

However, with little foresight in mind about the consequences of engaging in these patriarchal white wedding practices, I believe that these brides are encouraging their own subordination. This continues to trouble me.

Despite the challenge to be somewhat objective in identifying what purpose these practices served for the couples and the frustration I felt towards many of the brides, I thoroughly enjoyed the interview process. It amazed me that couples were so willing to invite me into their homes and share personal experiences about their wedding. It was refreshing to listen to dialogue that was positive and infused with excitement. The couples' willingness to participate in this study suggested to me that they were not aware of how their wedding could be viewed critically, since they had conformed to the scripted white wedding performance. I experienced some anxiety with regards to challenging certain taken-for-granted traditions that the couples had incorporated into their wedding, which I again noticed during the transcription of the interviews, whereby my hesitant questioning came to the fore. Especially because the couples were so likeable, I did not want to upset or insult them. This gave me a glimpse into the similar effects of benevolent sexism, whereby women would be less likely to challenge and critique behaviours, because of the 'nice-ness' of the interactions with men.

I observed that I felt a certain sense of connection to couple 8, who were so opposed to any tradition unless it had some meaning for them. I viewed them as those individuals in Plato's allegory of the cave that saw reality and not just a shadow on a wall. They also dared to go into those uncomfortable places where they knew they would be judged by friends and family, but perceived their beliefs a worthy enough cause to be judged for. Couple 8, in their deviance, confirmed that a less gender stereotypical and sexist wedding was possible. An alternative to the sexist white wedding thus became possible. This couple did away with many traditions that are explicitly sexist. In line with this, the bride in couple 8 did not change her surname, which is unusual in the South African context. Consequently the couple continues to be questioned and experiences a need to

justify their 'deviance'. It is unfortunate that the resulting critique is a form of backlash that the couple experiences for their non-conformist behaviour.

Similarly, I have received backlash from men and women regarding the topic of this research. The questioning and critiquing of this research as well as the backlash received by not conforming to white wedding traditions informs me that on the surface patriarchy is frowned upon; however, when it comes to challenging fundamental and taken-for-granted practices and rituals the room for social change is vast. It seems that the first deviation from the norm as system-challenging behaviour is possibly the most difficult, but it more easily allows for subsequent deviations. For example, when couples had been to a wedding where the practices of throwing the garter and the bouquet were omitted they were more likely to omit these practices at their own wedding.

Since many wedding traditions are blindly accepted, it has also become evident that when there is uncertainty about how to behave the default is that the status quo will prevail. The white wedding performance is infused with the dangers of paternalism, which is troubling, because traditional wedding practices are thought of with warmth and affection. Therefore the acknowledgement of paternalistic behaviour towards women in the white wedding as a form of sexism indicates that conscious social change is necessary. This thesis presents an attempt to point out these paternalistic wedding traditions, challenge taken-for-granted practices and to enable another step towards gender equality.

# 11 Conclusion

The white wedding is an important ritual for couples as they enter into marriage (Nelson & Otnes, 2005). It is significant for couples personally, but it also represents a public display of the couple's relationship transition from being single to being married (Kalmijn, 2004). Weddings are celebrated with family and friends, and thus become joyful and formative occasions for those involved. From an early age young girls are socialised to desire marriage and to have their own white wedding, during which they can be princesses in a fairy-tale (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). This indicates the status elevations that weddings enable for the bride.

From the wedding planning to the wedding day itself white weddings are noticeably patriarchal rituals, whereby women complete most of the wedding work and present themselves as passive during the wedding ceremony (Sniezek, 2005). The bridal role is associated with stereotypically feminine behaviours, which result in benevolently sexist treatment of the bride. Despite this, the status elevation and positive attention that women receive as brides is influential in permitting this treatment and the negative consequences that follow (Bambacas, 2002). However, there are further reasons proposed by SJT as to why women would engage themselves in this patriarchal ritual.

SJT suggests that subordinates maintain their own subordinate position through the justification of the status quo even when these social arrangements are noticeably unequal (Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). In line with this women encourage their own subordination through their participation in the patriarchal white wedding. This becomes evident with certain practices, such as, the bride engaging in most of the wedding planning, the groom's lack of involvement in the wedding planning, the bride being walked down the aisle by her father to be given to the groom, the groom and not the bride giving a wedding speech and the bride changing her surname upon marriage.

Despite the patriarchal nature of these practices women unquestionably continue to perform them as part of their white wedding.

In this research study, three aspects that contribute towards system justification are particularly apparent in the subordination of women through their white wedding, namely, women's depressed sense of entitlement, out-group contact and the reduction of ideological dissonance. First, through women's already depressed sense of entitlement brides would expect less for themselves and further encourage their disadvantaged position in the white wedding. Second, through the intimate and affectionate contact with the out-group of men during the wedding preparations brides are more likely to view the out-group favourably. By having this close contact women are also encouraged to conform to complementary gender roles, which maintain their subordinate position (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Third, when brides are questioned about the gender biased nature of their practices they aim to engage system-justifying mechanisms by justifying the unequal status quo to reduce their ideological dissonance. It has been noted that almost any justification of why brides engaged in a patriarchal practice serve to reduce ideological dissonance. The reduction of ideological dissonance serves a palliative function for brides whereby it reduces "anxiety, guilt, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 111).

This alleviating effect becomes evident in the white wedding discourses that couples use. The language that couples use to speak about their weddings constructs the wedding in a particular way (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Language allows the couples to construct the abovementioned sexist practices in more egalitarian terms. In this study the discourse analysis of the interviews brings the couple's intentions to the fore, whereby the bride's day and the fairy-tale wedding discourses construct the white wedding as being more in favour of the bride and less in favour of the groom. The discourses allow the couples to justify the sexist practices. For example, they suggest that women complete most of the wedding work because it is the bride's day and

consequently the bride must plan the wedding according to what it is that she wants. By serving a system-justifying function these discourses allow for palliation to occur, but also maintain patriarchy and thus gender inequality.

Because these discourses are commonly used and taken-for-granted, conscious effort is needed to consider how discourses influence gender unequal behaviour (Billig, 2003). This awareness is an initial step towards changing patriarchal practices and promoting positive social change (Becker & Wright, 2011). A variation of Hofstadter's (1986) technique, whereby female and male terms are interchanged, may shed more light on gender unequal discourses and practices.

Throughout the interviews it was noticeable that one deviation from the norm allows for subsequent deviations to take place. For example, when couples had been to a wedding where the practice of throwing the garter and the bouquet was omitted they were more likely to be flexible with this tradition during their own wedding. This suggests that once certain practices are initiated or omitted the initiation or omission likely to become more common, because there is an alternative practice that can be performed. It is hoped that this is also applicable to gender equal practices and that through more deviations from the norm gender equality in the white wedding and perhaps society in general would be encouraged.

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# 13 Appendix 1

### Ethical Approval: Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

**UNIVERSITY OF ™**
**KWAZULU-NATAL**
**INYUVESI**
**YAKWAZULU-NATALI**
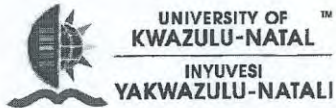
16 August 2013

Ms Ursula Froschauer 209502913
School of Applied Human Sciences - Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0641/013D
Project title: The Wedding Performance: Gender Performance and System Justification in Eurocentric, Heterosexual Wedding Ceremonies.

Dear Ms Froschauer

**Full Approval – Expedited**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

.......................................................
Dr Shenuka Singh (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Professor Kevin Durrheim
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken
cc School Administrator: Mr S Duma

# 14 Appendix 2

**Information & Informed Consent Form**

People use video recordings and photographs to record significant life events. This study investigates how individuals, as brides or grooms, speak about the video recordings and photographs of their wedding ceremony. During this interview you will be asked to talk about gender based decisions related to your wedding planning and your wedding ceremony, and how you thought about planning your wedding. You will also be asked to give information about the role that you played during the wedding planning and the wedding ceremony.

If you are willing to participate in this study you and your spouse need to participate in a 90 minute interview. The researcher will also look at the photographs and watch the video recording of your wedding, which will then be used as discussion points for the interview. By signing below, you are permitting the researcher to have access to copies of the photographs and video recording of your wedding, and to reproduce these in academic publications and presentations. You may request a copy of the research findings from the researcher once the study has been completed. In the unlikely event that the interview process raises uncomfortable issues you will be referred to a psychologist.

You are not required to give your name or any other personal details. All the information provided will be considered highly confidential. The data collected will be used as part of a PhD research study. Some of the data may also be published. Please ask for assistance should you not understand a question.

I ……………………………………………. accept to voluntarily participate in this research concerning my wedding ceremony. I am aware that
the information I provide will be kept confidential. I am at liberty to withdraw from the research study with no consequences for doing so.

Sign……………………………………… Date…………………………….

Ursula Froschauer (PhD student at UKZN) Supervised by: Prof. Kevin Durrheim
(Student's contact details) (Supervisor's contact details)

# 15 Appendix 3

**Interview Schedule as a Guideline**

Please tell me a bit about your wedding day. What happened on that day?

Who planned what for the wedding? How was this decided on?

Was family involved in the wedding planning?

Did you have a theme? How did you decide what theme you wanted for your wedding?

Who did you invite? And why?

What were you expected to do on your wedding day?

Why did you do this/that? (Perhaps referring to photographs or scenes in the video recording.)

Did either of you walk down the aisle? Why?

Why did you have photographs taken at your wedding?

What aspects of the wedding were not recorded in the video/photographs?

Who made the speeches? And why?

Was there anything you thought you had to do, but did not want to do at your wedding?

Was there anything you wanted to do at your wedding, but for some reason were not able to do?

Looking back, is there anything you would have wanted done differently?

Did you make any additions or changes to the wedding?

Did you have a rehearsal before the wedding?

Did either of you change your surname? Who changed and why?

Did you experience any restrictions of what you thought you could or could not do on your wedding day based on your gender?

Do you think your photographs were shot in a gender specific way?

Were there any gender specific issues that came up during the wedding planning and the actual wedding?

# 16 Appendix 4

**Example of South African Marriage Certificate**