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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

This thesis presents findings from a qualitative research study that was conducted with Black professional women in dual career marriages. It highlights the ways in which the participants in the study talk about marriage, autonomy and satisfaction in their marriages and the discourses that inform their talk.

In this introductory Chapter the rationale for this study is explained and an overview of the thesis is provided. The Chapter starts off by presenting the context within which this study was conducted as well as the researcher's background. This is followed by definition of terms that are commonly used in the thesis. It then proceeds to explain the rationale and objectives of the study. The theoretical background used in this study, social constructionism, is briefly outlined. Finally, an overview of the way in which the study was conducted is provided.

1.2. Context of the study

In this section the context of this study is provided to provide the reader with the background that informed the research. This section includes information regarding the academic rationale as well as the researcher's background. The discussion of the academic context provides some insight into the work that has been conducted

internationally on the subject of dual career marriages and it further articulates the gaps that still exist within the South African literature with regards to dual career marriages. In line with the research methodology and the concept of reflexivity, the researcher's background is presented to provide the reader with some background information that contributed to the initiation of this study.

1.2.1 Academic rationale

The institution of marriage has undergone many changes in recent years (Carlson & Sperry, 1991; Rall, 1984) and it is continuing to evolve in accordance with the changing dynamics within which marriages operate (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Larkin & Ragan, 2008). The involvement of women in paid labour has significantly impacted on traditional family structures (Haddock, Zimmarman, Ziena & Current, 2001; Jano & Naidoo, 2002). Almost two decades ago Silberstein (1992) commented that in the span of a single generation the family in which both parents work outside the home has gone from being an exception to being a rule. The increase in the number of women in the workplace has introduced a shift from traditional marriages to dual earner and dual career marriages. These marriage types challenge cultural norms about family configuration, gender roles and decision making (Williams, 2000). These changes sparked interest amongst researchers and initiated a body of research concerning the institution of marriage.

International literature on dual career marriages focuses on understanding or exploring role conflict (Kiger & Riley, 2000; Larkin & Ragan, 2008; Mackinnon, 1983), role sharing and marital satisfaction in dual career marriages (Baskin, 2002;

Silberstein, 1992), gender expectations (McLanahan & Walley, 2005); marital quality (Al-Krenawi & Lev-Wessel, 1999; Betchen, 2006), stress (Baskin, 2002; Puckin, 1990), decision making (Baucon, Burnett, Esptein, Rankin-Esquer & Sandin, 2002) equality (Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2008), and autonomy in dual career marriages (Ozzie & Harriet, 2002). Furthermore, a lot of research has focused on the negative impacts of dual career marriages such as divorce in dual career marriages and increased marital dissatisfaction (Carlson & Sperry, 1991; Silberstein, 1992). Recently research has also focused on the impact of dual career marriage on traditional values and the changing expectations of women in marriages (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Baloyi, 2007; Bartley, Blanton & Gilliard, 2005; Higgins & Duxbury, 1992; Mawere & Mawere, 2010; Mbatha, 2011).

Silberstein (1992) argued that women's pursuit of careers may introduce complications to their marriages as a result of the expectation that these women should break gender roles in families and lead the way towards equality at home, just as they do in the industrial world. The literature suggests that dual career marriages are contributing significantly to increased marital dissatisfaction and stress on spouses (Carlson & Sperry, 1991).

Baskin (2002) found that wives in dual career marriages tend to be more inner directed (i.e. they act on their own personal value systems in leading their lives) rather than focused on societal expectations and value systems. These women frequently break gender norms and this tends to create strain in marriages (Silberstein, 1992). More recent research has found that dual career marriages face the challenge of sharing power in a manner that is acceptable for both partners

(Coverman, 2001). In addition, Greef and Malherbe (2001) found that despite the increasing norm of women's employment and the expectation that women should contribute to the family's financial situation, traditional social assumptions about gender roles continue to enshroud many of society's attitudes.

This study is informed by the observable changes in marriages amongst Black South Africans. In the past traditional marriages were the norm amongst Black South Africans and within this marriage structure the husband was the breadwinner in the family and the wife was the caregiver at home (Shope, 2006). In traditional marriages a woman is expected to be submissive and dependent on her husband (Manganyi, 1973; Shope, 2006). However, the industrial period has seen women entering the labour market, which has resulted in the dilution of the traditional role expectations of husband as providers and wives as caregivers. Women are no longer financially dependent on their husbands, they are self-sufficient and contribute equally to the successful maintenance of their families (De Bruin, 2000). Their financial independence, level of education and powerful position in the workplace allow women the opportunity to make autonomous choices and decisions. However, despite these opportunities and their empowerment in the workplace, professional women find themselves in marital relationships where cultural expectations still dominate (Naidoo & Jano, 2002; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). These different social contexts present differing and conflicting expectations around how these women should construct their behaviour.

Within the work environment the professional woman is expected to behave in an independent, assertive, challenging manner (Harvey, Napier & Moeller, 2009) and to

demonstrate self-efficacy (Birchall, Hee & Gay, 1995). However, within the home environment the same woman is expected to behave in a submissive manner and to carry the roles and responsibilities that are traditionally associated with the role of a woman in the family (Frans, Schurink & Fourie, 2006; Hoza, 2010; Kambarami, 2006; Naidoo & Jano, 2003; Shope, 2006; Ssali, 2006). Such expectations are not aligned to the changing roles of women in marriages where most women are in full time paid jobs and where women are also contributing significantly to the economic survival of many families (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Crossfield, Jones & Kinman, 2005). These expectations in turn reduce the construction of women as equal partners in marriage.

Conflicting expectations make dual-career marriages an interesting topic of research, particularly in a society where dominant cultural customs still prevail (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Heeren, Jemmott, Tyler, Tshabe & Ngwane, 2011). South Africa is a diverse society with multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual attributes. It is a country that has a rich history, a history that has contributed to how people of this society construct their lives, their identities, their behaviours and their world-views. This study made use of this diverse context by choosing a sample from the wide population that could be experiencing similar challenges. The target population for this study was Black women who have professional careers.

Although both Africa in general and South Africa in particular are diverse societies certain experiences and common beliefs are shared by different groups of people. The sample used in this research study was chosen based on their common identity, which is African, Black women who are professionals in a specific marriage context.

Nwoye (2006) argues that Africanity is based on the sharing of similar experiences of the world as well as the dissemination of cultural traits. Nwoye further argues that in traditional African societies individuals operate within a community and one's identity is largely influenced by sharing and acknowledging cultural principles. He also suggests that the communal identification comes with multiple obligations and loyalties. For example, amongst Black South Africans in particular, there are cultural practices relating to marriage, which will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections. These cultural practices can be seen as socially constructed loyalties to which people adhere.

It is therefore not surprising that although research conducted at the beginning of the twenty-first century anticipated that the female labour force in South Africa would continue to grow significantly as young women become more career-oriented and aspire for higher educational status (Johnson & Mortimer, 2000) and financial independence (Brink & De la Rey, 2001), research also found that despite the aspirations to be career-oriented and financially independent, young South African women still feel obligated to maintain cultural values and norms (Johnson & Mortimer, 2000).

The author acknowledges that identities are always constructed and reconstructed and that, in the process of reconstructing our respective identities, every individual is faced with a variety of choices from which to select. This is also relevant to Black South Africans who, through integrating and engaging with people of other cultural groups, are faced with options to adopt different identities at different times (Miller, 1994). Although the individual identity of Black South Africans continues to be

transformed and recreated, the 'cultural' identity, which is shaped by tradition, seems to hold and remain relatively stable. Cultural marriage practices are an example of this traditional system that has remained relatively stable in the process of reconstructing identities. This 'cultural' identity provides a frame of reference and meaning for Black South Africans (Rudwik, 2006). This 'cultural' identity is discussed further in section 1.7.

In the next section the researcher's background is presented in order to further describe the context in which this study was formulated. The researcher's background is presented in the form of a first person narrative instead of a third person narrative.

1.2.2 Background of the researcher

This study was conducted by a professional Black woman in a dual career marriage who has faced challenges in the traditional marital arrangement. My status as an educated young woman allowed me to have dreams, and to aspire to be independent and successful, not only in my career but also in my marital and social life. I was raised by a single professional mother (following the death of my father when I was five years old) and I was taught to be independent and self-sufficient. My mother is a very independent, extremely hardworking woman who dedicated herself to the success of her children.

The nature of my profession is such that I am expected to function independently and autonomously. I found these qualities to be incompatible with the expectations

within my marriage. Within my marital context I was expected to be dependent, and to be cautious of how I behave. I was therefore not fully autonomous within the context of my marriage. In my marriage I am also expected to lose my sense of power and authority to my spouse. As a result I found myself constantly feeling caged and feeling that my autonomy was taken away from me and this was frustrating.

My identity had previously been largely defined by my professional status (I was a professional before I got married). I was accustomed to being independent in every aspect of my life. I had the autonomy to be and to do what I wanted, when I wanted without consulting with anyone else. When my marriage expected me to be dependent, I felt that it was interfering with my right to be an autonomous individual.

As a professional woman, I understood my rights and I saw myself as an equal partner in marriage. I also did not see myself as a traditional wife. I was working and sharing equally (expected but voluntarily) towards the maintenance of the household. As a result I found it difficult to assume behaviour associated with that of a traditional wife, as would be expected by my culture.

The first few years of my marriage were characterized by the constant power struggle and my attempts to maintain my own identity. Based on the demands set by ‘culture’ and Christianity, I found myself conforming to social expectations through my behaviour.

Although I would behave independently and with high levels of autonomy within my work environment, I adapted my behaviour within my marital context. My experiences taught me that a 'successful' definition of the self should take into account the context within which one operates. I learned to embrace the multiple social identities I faced and to behave according to the different roles. This implied continuously juggling roles and this adaptation has led to greater acceptance and a sense of personal well-being.

My personal experiences sparked my interest in exploring the subject of autonomy in dual career marriages. I was interested in understanding how women who have similar identities to mine construct their experiences. I hoped to give voice to women in dual career marriages and to contribute towards literature around this topic.

1.3. Rationale and objectives for the study

Considerable effort has been made internationally to research the experiences of people in dual-career marriages (Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). However, there is still some a paucity of literature within South Africa in relation to dual career marriages. This paucity has been noted by various researchers while exploring this topic (Naidoo & Jano, 2002; Puckrin, 1990; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). Most of the emerging literature in South Africa on dual-career marriages has been published in the field of industrial psychology. This research tends to focus on the impact of this marriage type on women in leadership roles (Booysen, 2000), as well as coping strategies, role salience and coping mechanisms for professional women (Naidoo &

Jano, 2003), career and life balance (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; De Bruin, 2000; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003) and role attitudes (Dimati, 1997).

The current research explored the ways in which professional women in dual career marriages where customary or traditional customs still dominate construct their experiences of marital satisfaction and autonomy. In this thesis the researcher presents the discourses that professional women in dual career marriages use to construct marriage, their autonomy in marriage and the ways in which their construction of autonomy in turn informs their construction of marital satisfaction.

Given the scarcity of literature in South Africa on dual career marriages it is hoped that the findings shared in this thesis will expand researchers' understanding of the experiences of professional women in dual-career marriages. In addition, it is hoped that the thesis will provide some insight regarding the specific population's endeavour to make sense of their situation. It is further hoped that the insights gained from this study will assist in developing therapeutic programmes for clinicians dealing with marital issues.

This study also aims to give a voice to women who are traditionally silenced under the practice of patriarchy. It is not uncommon for Black South African women's experiences and voices to be neglected or marginalized (Motsemme, 2002). Motsemme describes ways in which patriarchy plays a role in belittling and silencing women and she illustrates how, as a result of fear of being victimized; the participants in her study chose to remain invisible and silent in order to protect themselves and to satisfy the expectations of others. Silence for women in the

patriarchal system becomes the voice of self-protection (Motsemme, 1999). In addition, silence can be seen as a way of seeking acceptance and a sense of belonging.

1.4. Research questions

As indicated in the preceding discussions South Africa is a diverse society and as a result it is probable that a universal construction of experiences does not exist. With this consideration this study centred on the experiences of a particular social sub-group, that of Black South Africans. Black South Africans as a sub-group in society have their own ways of doing things, they operate within customs that have been passed on from one generation to the next (Shope, 2006). Their construction of their experiences is based on factors such as their historical, personal, cultural, social and educational experiences (Mare, 2001).

This research explored some of the challenges experienced by women in dual-career marriages where traditional norms regarding women's behaviour within marriage still prevail. The questions raised in this research were:

- What discourses inform Black professional women in dual career marriages' constructions about their marriages?
- How do they construct their autonomy in their marriages?
- How does their understanding of marriage and their construction of autonomy in their marriages inform their construction of marital satisfaction?

1.5. Theoretical framework

The topic of marriage can be investigated or researched from multiple theoretical backgrounds. These perspectives include, amongst others, cognitive theory, systemic theory, and socio-cultural theories. In this thesis the researcher chose to use social constructionist theory.

Social constructionism is concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain or account for the world in which they live (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). It has its roots in post-modern and post-structuralist frameworks. Both post-modernism and post-structuralism emerged in reaction to the notion of an absolute truth and an objective reality. These theoretical frameworks argue that knowledge, truth and reality are contextual (Becvar & Becvar, 2000) and that there are different views of reality and truth (Gergen, 1999). Chapter 2, section 2.3 and sub section 2.2.3, provides more background and discussions around the concepts of modernism, structuralism, post-modernism and post-structuralism.

In accordance with the principles of post-modernism and post-structuralism, social constructionism attempts to present findings as one of the multiple views around which the investigated issues could be articulated. The social constructionist framework was found relevant to this study as it fits well with the purpose of this research, which is to provide a perspective concerning the ways in which Black professional women in dual career marriages construct autonomy and how their constructions inform their perceptions of marital satisfaction. The findings are not presented as absolute truth, but as one of the multiple ways in which the investigated

issues could be construed. In this study social constructionism was used to identify discourses around marriage and autonomy in dual career marriages and to further understand how these discourses inform women's construction of their identities in this context.

These constructions were by using discourse analysis, which focuses on examining how people use language to construct versions of their own world. It is clear therefore that the theoretical framework and the analysis in this study supported each other. Both social constructionism and discourse analysis are concerned with examining and understanding the processes through which people construct meaning and their behaviour.

The topic of investigation and the main theoretical framework are also closely linked to feminist theories. Although the study did not adopt a feminist approach it did touch on women's issues, power relations and patriarchy. For this reason a high level discussion of a feminist framework was deemed necessary, and this is included in the theoretical section of the thesis.

1.6. Research approach

In this section the research design, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, is introduced. This study used a qualitative research methodology since the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation. Leedy (2000) described qualitative research as useful in answering questions about any

phenomena that aim to describe and understand the phenomena from the participants' point of view.

Data was collected by means of unstructured interviews with 11 participants. The aim of using unstructured interviews was to allow the participants to guide the direction of the research instead of using pre-formulated questions to guide the research process. All participants had been married between two and five years at the time they were interviewed. In addition, their husbands all held senior positions in their work environments. The participants are professionals and most of them are in senior positions at work.

Discourse analysis was used to make sense of the constructions of the participants. Discourse analysis is an approach that explores the underlying meaning and motivation behind a text (Parker, 1992). A discourse is referred to as the conversations and the meanings behind the conversations as understood and articulated by a group of people (Parker, 1992). According to Forrester, Ramsden and Reason (1997) Foucault argued that a discourse consists of acceptable statements made by a certain type of community such as people who share similar thoughts and ideas. The constructions that were articulated in this research were analyzed using discourse analysis in order to understand the meanings behind these constructions. Through using the discourse analysis approach the researcher endeavoured to explore how the participants construct marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction in relation to the broader social discourses about marriage.

1.7. Definition of terms/key constructs/concepts

This study contains certain key concepts and constructs. Although this constructs are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, they are briefly introduced in this early Chapter of the thesis to allow the reader to make sense of what is presented in the subsequent Chapters.

1.7.1 Black South African

Mare (2001) found that when people are asked to classify themselves, they tend to instantly use racial identity as a classification. It is argued that the attention that is placed on race globally has made people increasingly conscious about their own and others' race (Mare, 2001; Telles, 2002).

In South Africa this emphasis on race is not surprising given our Apartheid history, which placed emphasis on racial classification for the purposes of enforcing and maintaining Apartheid laws (Telles, 2002). Racial categorization in South Africa is one of the salient identity constructs used to assign people into group membership (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). This racial identity is typically informed by the colour of an individual's skin.

Under the Apartheid regime the South African population was classified and categorized into four major racial classifications, namely White, Black, Coloured and Indian (Jano & Naidoo, 2002; Mare, 2001). Since the inception of the democratic government in 1994 legislative changes designed to address past racial discrimination and promote the equality and upliftment of the historically

disadvantaged people of South Africa (for example, the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, 53 of 2003) have resulted in a different construction around the racial classification of people in South Africa (Lewis, 2001). These acts define 'Black' South Africans as all previously disadvantaged groups – Africans, Coloureds, Indians – with the term Africans referring to the group historically classified as Black. However, It should be noted that these legislative classifications are context bound and the socio-historical racial classification is still dominant (Mare, 2001). These different constructions suggest that the definition of Black using historic racial classifications cannot be universally adopted.

In this study, an ethnic definition is adopted as it encompasses a holistic construction or classification of people. Ethnicity refers to a group of people who share a common history, background, who may be identifiable through their sharing of similar physical features, who through the process of interacting with each other identify themselves as a member of the group, and where similar cultural practices are shared and transmitted (Pinderhughes, 1989; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Smith, 1991; Waters & Eschbach, 1995). It is argued that people can be of the same racial group but have different ethnicities (Alba, 1990).

1.7.2 Culture

Anthropologists agree that the construct of culture is extremely difficult to define (Eriksen, 2009). These difficulties are discussed further in Chapter 2. A definition of culture includes the view that culture represents customs, belief systems,

behaviours, and 'traditions' or ways of life of a particular group of people (Billington, Strawbridge, Greensides & Fitzsimons, 1991). Others argue that culture is constructed through interaction between individuals or a group of individuals and is learned through the process of enculturation (Hofstede, 1991; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). For example, the practice of lobola (which is discussed in Chapter 2) is a result of customs, beliefs and ways of doing things that are associated with a particular group of people in society. In Chapter 2 a detailed discussion around the social construct of culture is provided.

1.7.3 Marriage

Marriage practices differ around the world and from society to society and as a result there is no universal definition of the concept of marriage (Hosegood, McGrath & Moultrie, 2009). However, marriage is commonly defined as a legal unification of two or more individuals, through which sexual and parental rights are legitimated (Billington et al., 1991; Crapo, 1996). There are different types of marriages; in South Africa the two legally recognized marriage types are the civil marriage and the customary marriage (Bunlender, Chobokoane & Simelane, 2004). According to Bunlender et al. (2004) while there are the two legally recognized types of marriage the social definitions of marriage do not always match the legal definitions; people construct or attach meaning to the construct of marriage in multiple ways.

1.7.4 Dual-career marriage

As pioneers of the concept of dual-career marriages Rapoport and Rapoport (1978) defined a dual-career marriage as a family structure in which both the husband and wife pursue careers while simultaneously maintaining family life. Partners in dual-career marriages tend to emphasize occupation as the primary source of personal fulfilment (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1978). The roles held by the spouses in dual-career marriages require continuous development and thus a high degree of commitment (Rosin, 1990). The spouses in dual-career marriages are referred to as heads of the household (Mackinnon, 1983; Mclellan & Uys, 2009; Rosin, 1990).

1.7.5 Autonomy

The term autonomy is associated with being independent, self-sufficient and self-governed (Boni, 2002) and is defined as the extent to which an individual or a group of individuals have control over their own lives as well as having the authority to make independent decisions (Olubukola, 2008). Various psychological theories have emphasised the importance of the qualities of independence, self-sufficiency and self-actualization (Kagitcibasi, 2005). For example, psychoanalytic theory regards being autonomous as key to human development (Poortinga, 1992) while self-determination theory sees autonomy as one of the basic needs of human well-being, in addition to relatedness and competence (Sheldon & Gunz, 2009). From the social constructionist perspective the construction of the self as autonomous relates to the extent to which individuals ‘define’ their interactions with others as well as defining how they perceive themselves relative to others. Such a construction is

closely linked to the concept of identity. This discussion of autonomy is furthered in Chapter 2, section 2.7.

1.8. Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study. Chapter 2 introduces the concepts of autonomy, marriage and marital satisfaction by referring to the literature on these three discourses and summarizing previous research on dual-career marriages. Chapter 2 also provides the theoretical background to the study. Chapter 3 presents a description of the research process and the stages of the research process. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study in detail while Chapter 5 provides an integration of the findings with the theoretical framework and literature reviewed. Chapter 5 also concludes the study by presenting a summary of the overall research, stating the limitations of the research and providing recommendations for future research.

1.9. Conclusion

This Chapter has provided a synopsis of the thesis by highlighting some of the previous research on dual-career marriages. In doing so the Chapter briefly stated how this thesis will contribute to the broader literature on dual-career marriages, both in South Africa and internationally. The Chapter also reflected on the challenges that the researcher faced in her marriage and how these challenges served as the instigating factor for this research project.

In Chapter 2 a detailed background for the study is provided in terms of the discourses of marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction. This is done by reflecting on the literature around dual-career marriages. Chapter 2 also discusses the theoretical framework used in this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE AND THEORY

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the theoretical background for the research investigation and provides a review of the literature on the topic. The first part of the Chapter presents the theoretical background to the study, namely social constructionism. Social constructionism as a framework was deemed relevant to this study because it parallels the aim of the study and the research methodology. In accordance with social constructionist theory, this study did not aim to come to a conclusion of some final generalizable truth. Instead it aimed to identify, describe and understand how a group of women in a particular social context construct discourses about the phenomena under investigation. The study then aimed to relate these constructions to public discourses on the topic.

As will be reflected in the findings and discussion Chapter autonomy in the marital relationship and marital satisfaction are the results of diverse processes taking place in the context of marriage. These constructions are, however, embedded in the broader social environment, which contributes to the way in which women and society in general interpret and experience autonomy and marital satisfaction. These broader social and individual constructions are context bound and may vary from individual to individual and from community to community.

In discussing social constructionism reference is made to the history of social constructionist theory. As a result the theoretical discussion of social constructionism is preceded by a discussion of modernism, post-modernism, cybernetics and constructivism.

In addition, feminist theory is discussed as this study explored issues relating to women. The Chapter focuses particularly on post-modern feminism, which argues that gender is a social construct. This study touches on identity development and it was therefore also necessary to refer to the construct of identity and discuss various dialogues around identity formation.

The second part of the Chapter addresses the literature concerning marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction. The literature illustrates that social constructs such as autonomy and marital satisfaction come about through interaction between people and through the use of language. It can be concluded that through social interaction we construct our behaviour and define what is acceptable in different social contexts.

2.2 From modernism to post-modernism

Lyell (1998) indicates that during the last two decades of the twentieth century (1980s and 1990s) there was a transition in social research procedures and in psychotherapy from a modernistic framework to a post-modernistic framework. While modernistic theories adopted a linear causal explanation of human behaviour, the post-modernistic theories introduced the idea of the possibility of describing

behaviour in multiple ways. Modernism as a paradigm painted a picture of a world in which a single voice could prevail; the voice of objective truth. This paradigm placed certain individuals in the position of the 'expert' in explaining and ‘curing’ human behaviour (Gergen, 1992). The knowable world and the belief in universal properties lie at the core of modernism, which believes that the study of single instances can be generalized to other instances (Lyell, 1998). Modernism has been criticized for ignoring the impact of the larger social context on individuals and for believing in the microcosm of the individual rather than in the macrocosm of society (Anderson & O’Hara, 1991).

Post-modern theory emerged in reaction to the modernist ideas regarding the use of a language of objectivity, quantitative measurement, generalization and truth as facts and knowledge and argues for multiplicity, multiple realities and the plurality of voices (Kotze, 1994). McHale (1992) argues that the post-modern individual finds himself or herself in a society in which there are no universally constructed norms or values. Gergen (1992) argues that people are exposed to countless contradictory opinions from multiple forces and this makes it challenging for one to believe that objective conclusions can be reached about anything. From a post-modern perspective knowledge is viewed as a social construction constituted in language (Kotze, 1994).

Post-modernism introduced a shift from the belief in linear causality to a view of the universe as consisting of interrelated parts (Lyell, 1998). This new way of understanding behaviour was referred to in therapy as systemic thinking and behaviour was seen in terms of reciprocal and circular patterns of behaviour

resulting from interaction (Rapmund, 2002). In systemic thinking the emphasis shifted from understanding objects to understanding events and patterns (Keeney, 1983). Within therapy the post-modern framework, as viewed by systemic thinking, sees individuals as telling own stories with multiple meanings. This implies that there is not one universal version of a problem, but that there are multiple ways in which a problem can be perceived. For example, in a family of five each individual would provide a different account or construction of a situation or problem. Within the research context this implies that there are multiple constructions of a situation and that no single construction is inherently better than other constructions.

Systemic thinking in psychotherapy influenced the development of cybernetics, which in turn influenced the development of the constructivist and social constructionist paradigms. These constructs are outlined in the subsequent sections.

2.2.1 Cybernetics

Cybernetics has been defined as the science of communication and focuses on changing our views from the object to the wholeness of interaction (Keeney, 1983). Augustine (2002) defines cybernetics as a theory of interaction between open systems and subsystems. He further states that cybernetics can be first order or second order. In first order cybernetics the system is viewed in terms of inputs and outputs (Keeney, 1983). This way of viewing system is linear and examines causes and effects. In first order cybernetics the observer is seen as someone observing from the outside, analyzing inputs and outputs from the system and relating a

system's interdependence with other systems. The role or interaction of the observer with the observed is therefore excluded or ignored. In research that uses first order cybernetics the researcher is regarded as an expert who analyses the problem and comes to a conclusive account of the situation.

In second order cybernetics the system is seen as a whole. The observer is no longer seen as detached but as part of the system being observed (Keeney, 1983). Second order cybernetics is a result of the realization that it is impossible for a researcher to maintain objectivity when conducting research and analyzing a system. From the viewpoint of second order cybernetics data is co-constructed by the researcher and the participant. This means that factors such as the researcher's opinions, theoretical framework and historical background are all considered in the overall interpretation of the data (Rapmund, 2002). This is referred to as reflexivity in research. The concept of reflexivity is discussed in detail in the methodology Chapter.

The above discussion also applies to social constructionism, which argues that both the researcher and the participants contribute reciprocally and collectively to defining the data (Anderson & Goolishian, 1993). In the interview method of qualitative research, particularly the one used in this study, the participants' responses guide the researcher's questions. The researcher and the participants are therefore both actively involved in constructing discourse or text. The researcher is not seen as an expert. Rapmund (2002) argues that everything that occurs during the research process is entirely self-referential. This implies that the researcher uses his or her

own experiences and refers to his or her own understandings during the investigation.

Dell (1986) states that the move to second order cybernetics implied a simultaneous existence of multiple truths drawn by the observer. Keeney (1983) argues that second order cybernetics allows the researcher to see that your interpretation is one among several possible versions. When viewed from the second order lens the problem no longer has an objective existence but is created through language and conversations (Anderson & Goolishian, 1993). The shift from first order to second order cybernetics and the ideas presented above parallel the move towards constructivism, which argues that the world we live in is created by us and according to what makes sense to us (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). Constructivism is a central component of second order cybernetics and is discussed in the next section.

2.2.2 Constructivism

Constructivism developed from cybernetics in the 1980s as is based on the work of biologists Maturana and Varela (1980), who began asking questions about knowledge and how it is that we come to know certain things. This thinking was developed in relation to biology and the neurology of cognition. These researchers came to the conclusion that all knowledge is a construction or a subjective reflection of reality rather than a representation of an objective reality. Constructivism was developed further by Dell (1986) and Keeney (1983).

Constructivists state that human beings operate on the basis of symbolic or linguistic constructs that help them to navigate the world. Constructivism is a move from the position of having an objective view of the world to the understanding that we have an internal and subjective construction of the objective world (Kotze, 1994). Watzlawick (1984) states that reality is seen as a construction developed by those who believe that they have discovered and investigated this reality.

According to Hoffman (1990), although constructivism allows for alternative views of reality it has been criticized for not being comprehensive and for not taking into account the fact that there is a dominant social reality that constructs meaning. Critiques of constructivism argue that meaning is not developed independently within individuals, but socially through interaction (Lyell, 1998). These criticisms resulted in the development of social constructionism, which is presented in the following paragraphs.

2.2.3 Social constructionism

Gergen, Lightfoot and Sydow (2004) argue that there are many ways to tell the story of social constructionism, with each story constructing constructionism from its framework. For example, the origins of social constructionism have been traced back to George Kelly and his personal construct theory (Mair, 1989) while literature also documents the origin of social constructionism as arising from second order cybernetics and constructivism (Kotze, 1994). Social constructionism is also referred to as third order cybernetics by some authors (Lyell, 1998). Social constructionism has also been linked to post-modernist and post-structuralist paradigms.

Post-modernism developed from the modernist framework which viewed issues in linear and rational terms. The modernist researcher explains findings in terms of cause and effect and draws conclusions based on what he or she deems rational. Modernism placed emphasis on values, beliefs, and 'culture' and referred to the truth of experiences. In conducting research the modernist researcher attempts to find depth and interior meaning beneath events. Once this is completed he or she draws conclusions as objective reflections of the truth and thereby makes his or her findings generalizeable (Gergen & Gergen, 2003).

On the contrary, as outlined in the earlier paragraphs, post-modernism operates from the framework of multiple views of any situation and holds that no single view holds much more truth than other viewpoints. As a result post-modernist research refrains from presenting findings as absolute truths, but rather focuses on presenting findings as one way in which the events or experiences could be presented (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

Structuralism also argues for a holistic view of any situation and believes that all situations contain underlying meaning which needs to be unpacked and brought to the surface (Radford & Radford, 2004). As a result structuralists also view the world in binary terms and draw conclusions from observations and events. They then report their conclusions as objective truths. The post-structuralist framework emerged from Michel Foucault's explicit articulations on the impossibility of an objective reality and his argument that there are no definite underlying meanings that should be used to explain human conditions or experiences (Radford & Radford,

2004). Instead Foucault emphasised the plurality of meaning and the subjectivity of interpretation (Ahluwalia, 2010).

It follows from the discussion above that both post-modernist and post-structuralist theories emerged in reaction to the notions of absolute truth, objective reality and knowledge that are advocated by modernist and structuralist frameworks (Gergen, 1999). For post-modernists and post-structuralists knowledge, truth and reality are contextual. Within this framework reality is viewed as subjective (Becvar & Becvar, 2000) and the argument is that there are different views of reality and truth (Gergen, 1999). Language is regarded in these frameworks as an important element in the formation of meaning.

Social constructionism contends that knowledge and meaning is constructed through interaction and through the use of language (Augustine, 2002) and this knowledge in turn shapes human interaction (Burr, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 2003). For social constructionists what we take to be knowledge of the world and self has its origin in relationships (Gergen et al., 2004). This implies that we behave in ways that we have defined through our interactions with each other and that our lives are constructed through dialogue with each other. Constructionists argued that knowledge is created in conversations between people (Augustine, 2002). We know what we know as a result of the dialogue we have with others and through sharing meaning and experiences with each other.

Social constructionism as a theory is founded on the assumption that by reflecting on our own experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world in which we

live (Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Gergen, 2003). This means that our own experiences guide us in the construction of meaning about our lives. However, these constructs are not universal but are based on contexts and thus influenced by the dominant articulations of a particular time (Gergen, 1999).

Constructionism refers to the way that observers create a reality that is consistent with their ideas and the ideas of their broader social and 'cultural' contexts (Rapmund, 2002). Gergen (1999) also states that, for the constructionist, concepts and theories are viable if they prove adequate in the context within which they are created. Both these arguments place emphasis on the role that context plays in creating meaning and reality. Rapmund further argues that for constructionism meaning requires understanding the whole in relation to its parts. Therefore, in constructionism we construct knowledge by asking questions, developing answers, interacting and interpreting the environment.

For social constructionists "the terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically [and culturally] situated interchanges among people" (Gergen, 1985, p.267). Social constructions reflect the ways in which people make sense of or interpret human experience. They are collective and systematic attempts to come to common agreements about a state of affairs (Gergen, 1999). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) also argue that in social constructionism reality is the result of the social process accepted as normal in the specific context. This means that people know what they know from society; in other words people are born into already defined social structures and their behaviour is shaped and informed to a great extent by how others in their social structures behave and interact.

Friedman (1990) argues that within any given society there are institutions governed by rules and regulations. For example, marriage has established patterns of behaviour that define how individuals should act or behave. In addition, institutions exist in history and reflect concrete interests - they are not abstract. Friedman further argues that understanding these interests will assist in understanding the various institutions. Therefore, in order to understand the various institutions, it is important to understand the historical process in which they were produced.

Gergen and Gergen (2003) argue that social constructionism is not a singular and unified position and that it has multiple roots. Social constructionism is concerned with exploring the processes by which people come to describe, explain or account for the world in which they live (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). The intention is to articulate common grounds around which meaning is attached, looking at the past, the present and the future. This suggests that the understanding assumed by a particular 'culture' acts to frame its members' experience and to shape their behaviour (Rown, 1997). Augustine (2002) argues that the claims and viewpoints that people have at a point in time are taught by our 'culture' and society through learning. This learning is therefore carried into the current life styles and future behaviours of individuals.

The social construction of knowledge emphasizes the importance of language as a social phenomenon through which individuals relate. The next section discusses language as a discourse.

2.2.4 Language as discourse

Both constructivism and social constructionism emphasize the importance of language in constructing meaning. For constructivists language is a means of connecting people, while for constructionism language is a means through which meaning and understanding emerge (Kotze, 1994). This meaning and understanding is seen as always being context and time bound (Bruner, 1990). What this implies is that during interactions our understanding and interpretation of the narrative depends on the historical context within which the conversation takes place.

Language is also described as constituting meaning. The language we grow up with and live in within a specific 'culture' specifies the experiences that are available to us. Friedman (1990) and Kotze (1994) argue that from a social constructionist viewpoint the focus is not on the individual but on the social interaction through which language is generated and sustained.

The preceding discussion highlights that we construct knowledge and meaning through language; that knowledge is relevant within a specific time frame; that knowledge and behaviour are influenced by 'culture'; and that what stands out and informs behaviour is a result of the particular framework that is dominant and powerful at that particular point in time. In the next paragraphs the concepts of culture and power as social constructs are discussed.

2.3 Discussions on culture

This section provides an overview of how the concept of culture is constructed and reinforced in human interaction. It also provides an overview of how the use of the construct has been criticised by some theorists.

2.3.1 Introducing the concept of culture

The concept of culture is a social construct that has been widely researched in various disciplines. Anthropologists consider the construct to be extremely complex and difficult to define (Erikson, 2009). The complexity in defining culture stems from variations regarding the meaning of the term as there is no common usage or definition of the term, even within anthropology (Brumann, 1999). Clark (2006) argues that definitions and descriptions of what constitute culture may vary dramatically depending on the theory being used because various schools of thoughts have defined culture in different ways.

Fox and King (2002) refer to a study that was conducted in 1952 by Kroeber and Kluckhohn in which definitions of culture as used in anthropology and related fields were surveyed that found that there are hundreds of definitions of the concept. The study identified 162 definitions of culture, which varied from an ideational explanation of the construct (using symbols, values and representations) to an inclusive description of the construct (which incorporates ideas, symbols, social organizations and other dimensions of group life) (Fox & King, 2002). There are also differences in opinions on whether culture resides in the human mind (with behaviour and artefacts as outcomes of mental models) or in behaviour (culture viewed as socially

transmitted behaviour). Definitions also differ in relation to whether culture lies within an individual (who exercises choice-making and manipulation) or within a social entity (a group that "has" a culture) (Fox & King, 2002).

Despite these variations in the use and definition of the construct of culture there are also some commonalities and overlaps within these different definitions. Traditionally anthropologists define culture as a highly patterned, cohesive and coherent set of beliefs that shape human behaviour and are reproduced over generations through the process of enculturation (Billington, Strawbridge, Greensides & Fitzsimons, 1991; Crapo, 1995; Fox & King, 2002; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Waters & Eschbach, 1995). Enculturation is defined by the same authors as a process through which children learn the customs, beliefs and values of their culture. This learning can either take place through a formal transfer of knowledge to the young generation or through the young generation observing how the elders in their society construct their lives (Crapo, 1995). As a result of enculturation people thus behave in an expected manner in a given situation because they have internalized the norms and values of their particular society (Crapo, 1995).

Socio-cultural theorists argue that culture is a combination of belief systems, behaviours and traditions that are carried from one generation to the next through socialization (Berry, Dasen, Poortinga & Segall, 2002; Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). For social scientists culture thus refers to the norms and values that are regarded as proper and acceptable by members of a particular group (Hutter, 1997; Ruben, 2006).

The various definitions of culture have been criticized for varying reasons. Fox and King (2002) highlight several criticisms that have been levelled against the use of the construct of culture.

The first criticism refers to the fact that the construction of culture suggests homogeneity or delineation amongst people. It is argued that groups have unclear boundaries and it is therefore difficult to draw boundaries between groups. In addition, variations occur within groups and at times the variation within a group can be greater than the variations between groups. It is therefore argued that we cannot draw boundaries between cultures and should instead acknowledge that culture is dynamic and flowing. In support of this argument Brumann (1999) argued that because social realities are characterised by variability, conflict and change, it is linear to think of culture as something that suggests boundedness, stability and coherence. Eriksen (2009) argues that it is important to note that although culture includes shared meanings by a group of people, this does not imply that everybody in that culture has exactly the same knowledge and skills. Instead, it simply suggests that people who share a culture merely share a worldview.

The second objection concerns the inaccurate use of the construct of culture. Eriksen (2009) argues that the culture concept appears wide and vague and is used simplistically in everyday conversations. Other researchers have argued that the use of the construct culture as a noun is problematic. These researchers advocate for the adjective form of the word. Brumann (1999) argues that when culture is used as a noun the construct is turned into a thing, into something that has power, and he suggests that the adjective use of the work cultural moves the construct into the

realm of differences. The adjective use of the cultural concept acknowledges the varying boundaries of cultural practices and therefore endorses the construct of culture as heterogeneous. The socially popular usage of the construct of culture even within disciplines such as psychology and sociology positions culture as something that controls and regulates human behaviour and interaction. For example, Clark (2006) argues that culture has a marked impact on our daily lives and suggests that people's behaviour is largely a result of what has been dictated by cultural practices.

The third objection to the concept of culture is that it is positioned in a "humanistic" manner and that such positioning tends to be singular and evaluative. For example, expressions such as "some people are more cultured than others" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996; Eriksen, 2009) are clearly evaluative. It is argued that a more pluralistic and relativistic description of the construct would be more appealing as it would endorse the existence of different cultures in society as well as preserve the idea that all cultures are worthwhile.

2.3.2 Culture as a social construct

Culture has become a popular concept and the term is now widely used in social interactions. Researches have criticised the popular usage of the term for being too simplistic (Fox, 1999). Fox and King (2002) argue that the loose usage of the term extends beyond disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, and sociology. Typical common expressions that include the word culture include phrases such as

"corporate culture", "my culture", "culture of schools", "other cultures", and "in our culture" (Eriksen, 2009).

This usage of the term culture suggests that the construct has become synonymous with a sense of identity; people identify with the norms and values of their cultural groups and they therefore classify themselves as belonging to a particular social group (Crapo, 1995; Falola, 2003). In this way culture becomes fundamental and central to the ways in which people interpret the world and is used to shape the attitudes that people have regarding themselves and others and informs how people interact with each other (Waters & Eschbach, 1995).

Culture as a social construct is used to promote practices that are considered important to a particular social group. Culture thus has a marked impact on daily human interactions (Clark, 2006). According to De la Rey (1992) much of how we choose to live is an enactment of socially constructed cultural representations that give people a sense of continuity with the past.

As will be illustrated in the discussion on social identity theory, people tend to conform to and behave in accordance with socially acceptable norms and values. Culture therefore plays a powerful role in determining how people behave and how they construct their identity. As a form of identity culture also functions to control and limit individual behaviour and ensures that people conform to the predominant values and norms of a particular culture (De la Rey, 1992).

Conforming to cultural expectations is endorsed in society through rewards and sanctions; people are either rewarded for adhering to the rules and norms of their culture or they are punished when the rules of the culture are broken (Crapo, 1995; De la Rey, 1992). However, although culture is intended to shape behaviour, people do not always follow the guidelines of their culture and sometimes people violate cultural ideas for personal gains (Fox & King, 2002). Harris (1991) found that cultural patterns are not always faithfully repeated in successive generations and that in each generation new patterns are continually added. This suggests that culture is not static and that it adapts itself to the dictates of a particular era. This fluidity of culture allows for continuous reconstructions as members of a society redefine and renegotiate their ways of life. Culture is thus continuously constructed and re-constructed. Through interacting with people of different cultural backgrounds people tend to adopt other people's cultures and thereby dilute traditional cultural values (Shope, 2006). All of these factors contribute to the continuing complexity of attempting to define what culture means, stipulates and represents (Clark, 2006).

Robinson and Howard-Hamilton (2000) found that variables such as age, geographic location and ethnicity have an influence on the extent to which people adopt cultural values. It is therefore not uncommon to find that not all individuals in a given culture necessarily subscribe to the dominant and core values of their culture (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000).

Research also suggests that cultural ideologies are slow to respond to changes in social dynamics. Dual-earner and dual-career marriages are one example of this

slow rate of cultural change (Haddock & Zimmerman, 2001). Thus, although in traditional African culture women are expected to stay at home and be cared for by their husbands, African women are increasingly entering the world of work and contributing to the finances of the family. The traditional gender expectations prescribed by culture may or may not adapt to such changes. Haddock and Zimmerman (2001) argue that until cultural ideologies change to fit new realities, institutions such as dual-career marriages will continue to face unnecessary obstacles. One common challenge faced by dual-career marriages relates to the gender defined role expectations prescribed by culture and the negotiation of these roles. The next section discusses the construct of gender and power given its relevance to the study.

2.4 Gender and power

The term gender refers to the socially constructed attributes of being male or female, and is used in relation to the physical characteristics of being male or female. Gender is related to biological differences in terms of being male or female. The term used in biology is sex. People are born either male or female in terms of biological traits but it is through socialization that people are shaped to behave in accordance with the attributes that society deems appropriate for each of the sex groups. These learned behaviours constitute a gender identity and represent socially constructed norms regarding the division of labour, as well as the distribution of power, responsibilities and rights between men and women (Borgata & Montgomery, 2000).

According to Quek and Knudson-Martin (2008) gender is an intrinsic part of institutional systems such as law, education, and economics. They argue that gender is so deeply embedded in institutions that it is often unnoticed and unquestioned in everyday life. Gender places people in hierarchies and assigns power to those groups of people placed at the top of the hierarchy (Shope, 2006). Gender constructed roles in cultures and in societies dictate appropriate behaviour for both men and women, with men generally occupying positions of power (Ruben, 2006). For example, in Black South African "culture" the husband is traditionally regarded as superior to the wife, which results in women being placed in less powerful positions in marriage (Shope, 2006). Culture therefore continues to be a pivotal way in which gender is produced (De la Rey, 1992).

The ideology of gender determines what is expected of us, what we are allowed to do, what is valued in us, as well as the nature and extent of disadvantage, disparity and discrimination (Ruben, 2006). Institutionalized gender inequality continues to structure the domestic life of heterosexual women and men (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Moen, 2003). For example, within the framework of traditional African culture a married woman is expected to carry herself in a submissive and dependent manner. In this culture a woman is valued based on her reproductive abilities and her ability to rear her children. This construction of women often leads to discrimination against women (Hoesen, 2000; Kuumba, 2006).

Within the social constructionist discipline the work of Foucault plays an important role in understanding the constructs of power and power relations. Foucault states that power and power relations are seen in everyday interactions and practices

(Kotze', 1994). This includes the placing of people in hierarchies in relation to one another (Parker, 1990). According to Ssali (2006) all social practices are shaped by power and this includes gender roles. For example, as stated in the discussion on culture, men enjoy the privilege of being constructed as powerful and as having authority over women. Parker (1990) further argues that power plays a role in the way the self is constructed as the subject and object of discussions.

Berdhahl and Fiske (2007) state that power is socially situated and relative within a particular social relationship. This implies that one can be powerful in one social context and not have power in another context. For example, a professional woman can have power within her circle of friends and in a work environment as a result of her position, but at home she may be powerless as a result of her position within the context of African traditional marriage.

Farganis (1993) argues that within any given society there are institutions that are governed by rules and regulations. For example, marriage has established patterns of behaviour that define how individuals should act or behave. According to Farganis, institutions exist in history and reflect concrete interests, they are not abstract. Understanding these interests assists in understanding the various institutions. Farganis further states that in order to understand the various institutions, it is important to understand the historical process in which they were produced. With this framework, Farganis operates from the principle that history determines what is current and in order to understand the current situation it is necessary to understand the historical background.

The feminist framework is closely linked to the construct of power and the parameters of this research. Feminism is not the main theoretical framework for this study, it was deemed necessary to briefly refer to feminism because this study focuses on women's issues. Particularly relevant to feminism in this study is the construct of patriarchy and culture, which has been questioned by feminists. The next section gives a brief overview of the feminist framework.

2.4.1 A feminist framework

The term feminism is used to describe a political, cultural, or economic movement aimed at establishing rights for women. Feminism is also referred to as a political discipline that is directed at changing existing power relations between men and women across all spheres of life (Hassim, 2001; Weedon, 1997). Although feminism is universal or global, the exact definition of the construct and what it stands for vary globally (Anderson & Cudd, 2005; Campell, 1993).

The fundamental interest of all types of feminism is to understand gender politics, power relations and sexuality. Some of the discourses explored in feminism are patriarchy, stereotyping and discrimination (Buttler, 1995; Byrne & Carr, 2000). This thesis refers to the cultural doctrine in which patriarchy is advocated and which expects women to behave in a particular manner. In the preceding discussion reference was made to the stereotypes associated with women, society's expectation regarding appropriate behaviour for married women as well as the distribution of power in families.

As already stated there are different approaches to feminism. This thesis focused on post-modern feminism, which has been built on the ideas of Foucault, De Beauvoir and Derrida. The proponents of post-modern feminism criticize the structure of society and the dominant order, especially its patriarchal aspects. Post-modern feminism operates on the premise that gender issues are socially constructed through language and in interaction and that universal claims about women, gender and patriarchy should be avoided (Anderson & Cudd, 2005; Buttler, 1995). This implies that social constructions of gender and behavioural expectations are relative for each society.

The most notable distinguishing factor of post-modern feminism is its belief in multiple truths, multiple roles and multiple realities (Olson, 1996). This means that dialogue around women's concerns will always be susceptible to new interpretations (Buttler, 1995; Gouws, 2004). This belief system parallels the social constructionist view on multiple constructions of reality. In this study the researcher attempts to present a view of the ways in which Black South African professional married women construct the concepts of marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction.

Feminism in South Africa has been criticized for relying on ideas dictated by American or European models, and for not catering for the specific cultural, socio-political and socio-economic contexts of South African women. African feminists contend that women's issues are not homogenous, but are characterized by different historically developed trends that try to explain subordination, exploitation and oppression of women within different socio-political and cultural contexts (Ssali, 2006).

Although the need to redefine feminism in South Africa is acknowledged, most South African feminists agree that South African feminism needs to focus on the liberation of sexist roles, domination and oppression (Padayachee, 1997). South African feminists contest the cultural oppression that women face on a daily basis (De la Rey, 1997; Kotze', 1994) as well as the unfair distribution of power (Gouws, 1998). Campell (1993) also argues that in South African society men are awarded dominance in their marriages and culture poses restraints on women in terms of how they should behave. As a result of the restraints posed by cultural expectations on women, women in marriage form an identity that supports these cultural expectations.

2.5 Formation of an identity

According to positioning theory a person is positioned or positions him or herself by reference to a combination of personal attributes that influence the possibilities for interpersonal relationships (Schmidle, 2009). Identity is seen as an attribute or characteristic of the self that is determined by the social and historical context within which that self operates (Ligorio & Pugliese, 2004). Identity is seen to be generated and constructed through some form of internal and external dialectic within a particular environment. Thus, identity is seen as fluid rather than fixed (Mleczko, 2011). This suggests that an identity is constructed and developed through social interaction and that it is not an innate quality of an individual.

It is further argued that the self is multiple, complex, contextualised and can adapt to changes in time and place (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010), once again confirming

that the positioning of the self is relative and constantly in flux. Dialogical self theory agrees with positioning theory and argues that in the era of globalisation, changing cultures and societies the self is constantly developing and should therefore always be located in time and space (Hermans, 2001b). According to Hermans the self is a fluctuation of positionings. Based on these fluctuations and the way in which the self is developed, the type of identity that an individual creates can either be personal or collective, with both identities closely entangled (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Mleczko, 2011; Schmidle, 2009).

An individual's identity includes both the personal attribute of self as subject "I" and the self as object "me". These two senses of self operate on a continuum by maintaining equilibrium (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010; Valsiner, 2008). According to dialogical self theory, an individual is connected to the world through the "me" attribute of the self and this connection is used to develop a social self. As a result of multiple connections with the social world an individual develops multiple social selves. As a result of these multiple connections the "I" component of the self allows for variations in interactions among different selves and the position that the "I" holds can change from one moment to the next (Hermans, 2008; O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010).

Dialogical self theory therefore argues that a sense of self is influenced and co-constructed by relationships with others (Hermans, 2008). This supports the constructionist view that an identity is a construction that results from labels provided by others or the self during social interaction (Mleczko, 2011). Positioning theory

and dialogical self theory thus highlight the role of social relationships in shaping the self (Holmann & Hannover, 2006).

Both positioning theory and dialogical self theory maintain that an individual has multiple selves or social identities and that it is possible for a person to belong to multiple social groups simultaneously (Mleczko, 2011; Schmidle, 2009). This multiplicity of the self produces a healthy, well-functioning individual (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010), as the individual is able to behave in accordance with what is expected of him or her at a particular point in time.

According to social identity theory (SIT) the construction of an identity can be either public (social) or private (personal) (Katsiaficas & Kiros, 1998; Tjafel & Turner, 1986). SIT is a popular theory of identity that was developed in order to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discriminations (Tjafel & Turner, 1986). According to Tajfel and Turner the self has two components: a personal identity and a social identity. In the case of personal identity, a person does not have only one "personal self", but rather has several selves that correspond to circles of group membership. Different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on the basis of his or her personal, family or national "level of self" (Turner, 1982).

Social identity is an individual's self-concept and relates to the knowledge, value or emotion attached to the group to which that individual belongs. The social identity framework focuses on the extent to which individuals feel strongly connected to their group as well as the degree to which being a member of a group constitutes a central aspect of self (Fuligni, 2008).

Duncan and Ratele (2003) argue that social identity can be defined as the individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups. In other words social identity is an individual-based perception of what defines the "us" associated with group membership. This form of identity is distinguished from the notion of personal identity, which refers to self-knowledge that derives from an individual's unique attributes.

According to SIT social identity consists of three central ideas: categorization, identification and comparison. Categorization refers to the process of categorizing objects or people in order to understand things and social categories. These categories could include ideas such as Black, professional, married and woman. Through categorizing, people place themselves and others in groups. For example, a person would include herself as a member of one group while excluding herself from other groups. The groups in which an individual would categorize herself are considered to be an in-group, while the groups from which the individual would exclude herself would be out-groups (Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991). A simple illustration of this would be a biological categorization of self as either female or male based on biological traits or attributes. Foster and Louw-Potgieter further argue that behaviour is also defined by reference to the norms of the groups to which we belong.

Identification refers to the process of identifying with groups to which we perceive ourselves as belonging. One can identify oneself as an individual (personal identity) or as a group member (social identity). Foster and Louw-Potgieter (1991) define identification as a social, transitive and dialectical process which takes place within a

specific historical context. It is argued that individuals do not simply identify; instead they identify with something or someone. In addition, social identities or social categories have an evaluative component and the process of social comparison is used to determine social membership (Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991). With social comparison, one's own group is compared to other groups using some dimension of comparison.

Turner's (1985) self-categorization theory is closely linked to SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This theory postulates that at certain times we perceive ourselves as unique individuals and at other times we perceive ourselves as members of groups. Turner (1985) argues that these two perceptions are equally valid expressions of self. Self-categorization theory thus suggests that our social identities are as true and basic to the self as our personal identity. The definition of the self as either personal or social is flexible. Having a particular social identity also means seeing things from the group's perspective, which includes acting to fulfil the expectations of the role.

The preceding discussion detailed the theoretical framework (social constructionism) that was used in this study in order to explore and understand the ways in which the participants construct the concepts under investigation. As outlined in this section the social constructionist framework argues that meaning is constructed through interaction and it is through interaction that people construct their behaviour. The social constructionist framework also argues for the multiplicity of constructions, which means that for each experience there are multiple constructions as each person will have his or her own construction of the same experience.

It is interesting to note that while the preceding discussion highlighted at least three theories of identity, these theories have significant overlaps. These overlaps include the arguments that the self has multiple identities, that the description of oneself can either be personal or social depending on context, that a person's identity and how he or she positions or constructs him or herself operates on a continuum, and that to develop a healthy sense of self requires understand the different contexts within which he or she operates. The next section of this Chapter presents the literature on marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction.

2.6 Literature review on marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction

In this study the literature review was conducted in tandem with the data collection and data analysis. As new information emerged during the data collection the researcher interviewed more participants to determine whether the ideas were consistent. Similarly the literature was studied on an ongoing basis based on the emerging 'themes' the were identified during the process of data collection. Creswell (1994) views this as a common process in qualitative research, where data collection informs the literature that needs to be reviewed.

The literature presented in this section is aligned with the theoretical framework of the study which is social constructionism. The sub headings are formulated to accommodate the theoretical framework and each section of the reviewed literature provides multiple constructions of the concepts of marriage, autonomy, and marital satisfaction.

2.6.1 Overview of the meaning of marriage

The construct of marriage is difficult to define as there are many variations of marriage in society; these variations depend on the ways in which a particular social group defines marriage (Crapo, 1996). As a result there is no single definition of marriage, instead definitions of marriage are relative to individual beliefs or are constructed by a particular social group. Within the social constructionist paradigm from which this study is conducted it is not possible to formulate any definitive or essentialist definition of marriage since the paradigm acknowledges that people differ in the ways they construct marriage. For example, McLanahan and Waller (2005) state that a marriage often embodies two distinct views: “his” and “hers”. These authors argue that men and women have different subjective experiences of marriages as a result of gender inequalities within society. Each partner therefore brings a set of beliefs and characteristics to defining marriage.

While it is acknowledged that there is no single definition of marriage in this section a few definitions of marriage are presented to highlight the different ways in which marriage is constructed. These differences show that the construction of marriage can be problematic due to the variations in the way in which the concept is defined. However, these constructions do share similar themes, including the endorsement of marriage as the formalization of an intimate relationship with defined roles, a legal commitment and as a permanent ‘feature’. Although this endorsement is widely accepted it is not necessarily the only way in which marriage can be interpreted.

- Silberstein (1992) argues that marriage is a formal union of a man and a woman by which they become husband and wife.
- Ingoldshy and Smith (1995) define marriage as a socially legitimate sexual union, beginning with a public announcement and undertaken with some idea of permanence. They further argue that marriage is consummated with a more or less explicit marriage contract that spells out reciprocal rights and obligations between spouses, and between the spouses and their future (or present) children.
- Crapo (1996) argues that marriage is a rite of passage that unites two or more individuals as spouses. It is a socially accepted sexual and economic union that gives parental rights to the couple and it involves a lasting commitment between the spouses.
- Rall (1984) defines marriage as a man and a woman living together in an intimate relationship, committed and responsible to each other, and liable to certain societal expectations.
- The unification of individuals as spouses can take on various forms, such as monogamy, polygyny and polygamy (Crapo, 1995; Rall, 1984). Monogamy occurs when two persons are joined as spouses; polygamy occurs when a person is permitted to have more than one spouse at the same time; polygyny occurs when a man is permitted to marry and have more than one wife. The constructs of polygyny and polygamy are often used interchangeably to refer to a man having more than one spouse; this could be because instances of a wife having more than one husband are rare.

The most common type of marriage in most societies is monogamy (Crapo, 1996), but other societies also practice and legalize polygyny. For example, in South Africa it is not uncommon for men from Black ethnic groups to have more than one wife at the same time (Mbatha, 2011). The practice of polygyny in South Africa is supported by customary marriage practices, which form the core practice of marriages amongst Black South Africans (Mbatha, 2011).

2.6.2 Marriage in the Southern African context

In South Africa there are two legally accepted forms of marriage: civil marriage and customary marriage (Bunlender et al., 2004). However, these authors argue that in addition to the two legally recognized types of marriage there are other social definitions of marriage that do not always match the legal definitions, for example, cohabitation and "parenting a child". It is argued that such differences are the result of the multiple ways in which people construct or attach meaning to the construct of marriage. The different constructions relating to the concept or practice of marriage illustrate the changes that are occurring in society in relation to the construction of marriage. In the next sections an overview of civil and customary marriages is presented.

2.6.2.1 Civil marriage

A civil marriage is defined by law as a marriage that must be conducted in a church or another building used for religious services, or in a public office or private house with open doors, and in the presence of the parties to the marriage and at least two

witnesses [however, in the case of serious illness or injuries, the marriage may take place in the hospital or facility concerned] (Department of Home Affairs). Although people register their marriages under the civil marriage act, amongst many Black South Africans the registration of a civil marriage is preceded by traditional marriage practices (Bunlender et al., 2004; Mbatha, 1998b; Meekers, 1992; Nhlapo, 1999).

2.6.2.2 Customary marriage

Customary marriage, which is documented under the Recognition of Customary marriage Act 12 of 1998 (RMCA), refers to any marriage that has been conducted in accordance with the customs and practices that are traditionally observed amongst African people of South Africa and which forms part of their culture (Hosegood, McGrath & Moultrie, 2006; Mamashele, 2004). Once the couple has adhered to the rules specified in their culture they can register the marriage under the RCMA. The act accord a wife equal legal status to that of her husband and grants the wife full capacity to enter into contracts, to acquire assets and to dispose of assets (Mamashele, 2004). The legislation further acknowledges that the wife or married woman is capable of making decisions that are sound and it therefore recognizes the married woman as an independent individual (Mamashele, 2004).

Although the legislation recognizes wives in customary marriages as independent this recognition contradicts the customary or traditional role expectations as set by these cultures. For example, traditional customs continue to dictate and construct women as inferior and secondary to their husbands (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). Hoza (2010) argues that Black women's subordination is constructed and maintained

through traditional African marriage institutions. The equality status accorded to women by the laws surrounding customary marriage is therefore currently more of an illusion than a reality (Mamashele, 2004).

Socio-cultural or traditional expectations of the roles of men and women in marriage dictate that the man provides for his family and he is given all authority to direct his household. The roles within the marital setup are socially constructed and defined in accordance with sex role stereotypes (Carlson & Sperry, 1991), with the men given the authority to make all major decisions in relation to the family including the nature of the family's lifestyle (Rall, 1984). In contrast, women are expected to take care of the emotional needs of their families, thus assuming a nurturing role (Greef & Malherbe, 2001).

Rall (1984) further argues that historically marriages were the central institutions through which men and women's interactions and behaviour were channelled. Marriage served political, social and economic functions to the extent that individual needs were a secondary consideration. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when other institutions began to take over some of the functions of the family, for example education, the particular socially constructed definition of marriage began to fade (Carlson & Sperry, 1991).

This thesis focuses on one such change in the institution of marriage, the emergence of the dual-career marriage. This form of marriage is the result of women's participation in paid labour outside of the home. Later in the section the two types of

marriage (dual-earner marriages and dual-career marriages) that followed economic transitions in society are discussed.

A common custom that relates to marriage amongst Black Africans across the African continent and which forms the basis of traditional or customary marriages is the practice of lobola (Ansell, 2001; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Heeren, Jemmott, Tyler, Tshabe & Ngwanye, 2011; Mawere & Mawere, 2010; Mbatha, 2011). In certain areas of the African continent all customary marriages are anchored on the payment of lobola (Mawere & Mawere, 2010). In the next section the construct of lobola is discussed in detail.

2.6.2.3 The practice of lobola

African marriages are negotiated through the lobola process, which is a widely recognized marriage custom across the Southern African continent (Ansell, 2001; Mbatha, 2010; Mawere & Mawere, 2010). The concept of lobola can be translated into English as bride-wealth or bride price (Ansell, 2001; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Hosegood et al., 2006) and involves the payment of property from the groom's family to the bride's family. The payment of the bride price follows negotiations by the delegates from the two families (bride and groom's families) through a messenger (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). While traditionally cattle were transferred from the groom's family to the bride's family, the bride-wealth now frequently takes the form of both cash and live cattle (Heeren et al., 2011; Kambarami, 2006). The number of cattle or the value of the bride-wealth is dependent on the bride's background, her education, and the social position of her family (Heeren et al., 2011).

It should be noted that although the lobola practice is common in Africa, there are procedural differences from one cultural group to the other. For example, in the Zulu culture and particularly in rural KwaZulu Natal the British colonial administration of 1869 set and fixed the lobola price at 11 head of cattle or their equivalent value (Burman & Van der Werff 1993; De Haas 1987; Hunter, 2005; Preston-Whyte 1993). In Kenya Chief Kirera attempted to proclaim a bride-wealth limit of six cows and a bull in order to make it affordable and within the means of most young men. However, the wealthy people ignored the limit and pushed the bride-wealth into an upward spiral, thus edging some men out of the marriage market (Shadle, 2003).

It is argued that the payment of lobola gives the man power over his wife and his children (Chambers, 2000; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Kambarami, 2006). The inequality that is promoted by the practice of lobola is seen as placing women in subordinate positions (Kambarami, 2006). Despite reports that the practice of lobola results in inequality between men and women in society and between wives and husbands in marriage (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010) the practice remains highly valued by its practitioners (Ansell, 2001).

There are different arguments around the subject of lobola and this subject has sparked debates and various outlooks in society. Although this study is not centralized around the concept of lobola, a brief overview of some of the debates around this practice might be beneficial in providing the reader with a context from which to understand some of the challenges and concerns that are raised by the participants in the findings. For readers who are interested in following the debates

around the practice of lobola, the sources cited below can be used as a point of reference for further investigation of the subject.

There are both positive and negative perceptions of lobola (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). The positive constructions around the practice of lobola include seeing it as a symbol that a wife is valued (Chamber 2000), a valuable part of African culture that needs to be preserved (Ansell, 2001; Burn, 2005), a morally correct act, and a tradition and cultural heritage that needs to be preserved (Ansel, 2001; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). In addition, lobola can be seen as a guarantee of good faith on the part of both the husband's and the wife's families (Heeren et al., 2011; Thorpe, 1991); as a gift symbolizing an earnest belief in the successful outcome of the marriage and as an act that both validates and shows the seriousness of the man, thereby reducing the divorce rate (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). Finally, lobola is also understood as a token of appreciation and a way of thanking in-laws for bearing and rearing a wife for the husband (Ansell, 2001; Heeren et al., 2011; Meekers, 1992) and as a unifying force, binding and cementing the relationship between two families (Bourdillon, 1990).

The negative constructions around the practice of lobola reflected in some studies are centred around the view that the practice of lobola has become commercialized in society and that bride's families ask very high prices that result in women being treated (Ansell, 2001; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). In addition, critiques of lobola argue that it is a source of oppression for women and it perpetuates gender inequality (Ansell, 2001; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010); that fathers of the brides (to

be) are using lobola as an escape from poverty (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010); and that it places women in subordinate positions (Kambarami, 2006).

Billington et al. (1991) argue that while cultural practices are intended to shape behaviour, people do not always adhere to the guidelines of their culture. It is therefore not uncommon to find that some individuals abuse the practice of lobola while others attempt to dilute or abolish the practice. Following from their research about the perceptions of lobola among university students, Chireshe and Chireshe (2010) conclude that, like all traditional customs, the practice of lobola is open to abuse and distortion in the modern world.

Despite the controversies surrounding the practice of lobola, the research discussed above indicates that this practice persists even among urbanized and educated Africans (see Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Mawere & Mawere, 2010; Meekers, 1992). The custom of lobola can thus be seen as a cultural ritual that has endured the test of time (Heeren et al., 2011; May, 1993), and it continues to be practiced as it forms part of the culture (Ansell, 2001; Burn, 2005). From a cultural perspective lobola is regarded as the right thing to do and as a practice that preserves the traditions and customs of the African community (Heeren et al., 2011).

Literature focusing on the practice of lobola around the African continent suggests that the practice should not be abolished (Ansell, 2001; Burn, 2005; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Getecha & Chipika, 1995; Heeren et al., 2011; Mawere & Mawere, 2010). Chireshe and Chireshe (2010) write that opposing this ritual would be similar

to making a cry in the wilderness in that those individuals who attempt to oppose this custom are likely to be ignored.

During the interview process the two dominant marriage practices that the participants referred to were the Christian and cultural constructions of marriage. As a result the literature discussion is limited to discussing the construction of marriage from the Christian and cultural frameworks. This is followed by a brief discussion concerning dual earner marriages and dual-career marriages. The last part of the discussion presents an overall summary and conclusion regarding the discourse of marriage.

2.6.2.4 The Christian discourse on marriage

Christian marriages were introduced to the African continent by Christian missionaries who found customary marriages to be 'barbaric' (Mann, 1983). Unlike the customary marriages, which allow for polygyny, Christian marriage promotes monogamy as a fundamental marriage practice and thereby constructs marriage as the unification of a man and a woman. A study conducted in Lagos found that, regardless of their denomination, missionaries regarded monogamy as the most fundamental characteristic of Christian marriage (Mann, 1983). Christianity is argued as giving Christians the right to monogamy (Weber & Craig, 2003). In Christian marriage the marital vows unite two individuals and sets responsibilities for both husbands and wives. A important difference between Christian marriages and traditional African marriages is that while Christian marriage is seen as uniting two

individuals, traditional African marriages are seen to be uniting two kin groups (Baloyi, 2007; Weber & Craig, 2003).

The Christian discourse on the unification of a man and a woman begins with the story of creation as narrated in the Bible, which argues that after the universe was created God created a man and then immediately found it desirable for a man to have a companion. A woman was formed from a man's rib, hence called woman (Good News Bible: Genesis 2, vs. 18); in this way a man and a woman were unified. This unification is currently understood as being marriage. The Christian framework therefore defines marriage as something that followed the creation of the universe and as something that preceded the establishment of societies and cultures.

Christian literature also documents clear and explicit roles and power relations between husbands and wives. For example, Ephesians 5:22-24 states "wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband has authority over his wife … and so wives must submit completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ". Women are thus clearly expected to be submissive to their husbands. Within the Christian framework within the family context the man is seen as an equivalent of Christ. Christians are Christ's followers and they regard him as superior and almighty, by positioning men as the equivalent of Christ the Bible clearly describes the superiority of men in the marital context. Baloyi (2007) argues that God expects individuals to be submissive and that submission is therefore part of the Christian life-style.

Weber and Craig (2003) argue that God determined how the partners in marriage should behave. According to Christianity the wife was created as a helper to the husband and for that reason the wife ought to subject herself to her husband. The Christian discourse on marriage thus distinguishes clear roles for husbands and wives. While the husbands are portrayed as economic providers, the wives should be mothers and homemakers (Mann, 1983). Within the Christian discourse wives are clearly constructed as people holding a less powerful role. Wives are also expected to be dependent. The submissive role and behaviour of women is emphasized throughout the Bible and this emphasis clearly demonstrates that within the Christian discourse wives are expected to be inferior to their husbands. Examples of these Biblical verses include, but are not limited to Titus 2:4; 1 Peter 3:1; and Colossians 3:18. In addition to their responsibilities as mothers and homemakers missionaries also depicted Christian wives as moral exemplars and custodians of society's moral values (Mann, 1983).

As a result of the influence of Christianity, Baloyi (2007) argues that a lot of Biblical scriptures have been used by African men to subject their wives and to further their own socially constructed power. He further argues that communities have treated women in a manner that has led them to believe that they cannot do anything without the approval of their husbands.

2.6.3 Dual earner marriages

Industrialization, urbanization and modernization have changed the nature of marriages, resulting in a tendency for both spouses to be engaged in paid work

(Ferree & Wilkie, 1998). Silberstein (1992) argues that in the span of a single generation the family in which both spouses work outside the home moved from being an exception to being a rule. With this change husbands were no longer the sole providers in their families and women began sharing the provider role.

The practice of dual-earner marriage is based on egalitarian principles, where both spouses are breadwinners. This results in sharing domestic chores and childrearing responsibilities according to aptitude and time availability (Silberstein, 1992). This contrasts with the traditional gender related sharing of household responsibilities, where the wife assumes the domestic chores and childrearing responsibilities. As a result of both partners working the negotiation of roles is often a point of contention in dual-earner marriages. In dual-earner marriages roles are constantly negotiated and agreed upon by the two partners (Kiger, Riley & Stevens, 2001; Rall, 1984).

In dual-earner marriages, although both partners have jobs and are contributing to the economic needs of the family there are no demands on an individual's commitment to work role or constant updating of professional development (Sekaran, 1986). In dual-earner marriages the point of interest is that both partners bring income or sustainable income to the family.

As women began to contribute to family income there was also a noticeable increase in the number of educated women in the workplace (Byrne & Carr, 2000). According to Betchen (2006) the gains made by women in society as a result of achieving higher education and training have resulted in women establishing themselves in prestigious careers and earning substantial incomes. The presence of women in the

workplace has also resulted in a tendency for professional males and females to marry each other. This has led to the establishment of yet another type of non-traditional marriage, the dual-career marriage (Larkin & Ragan, 2008), which is discussed in the next paragraphs.

2.6.4 Dual-career marriages

The term dual-career marriage was first coined in the late 1960s and mid 1970s by Rapoport and Rapoport (1978), who are regarded as the pioneers and founders of dual-career family research. They described a dual-career marriage as a family structure in which both husband and wife pursue careers while simultaneously maintaining family life. These authors found that partners in dual-career marriages tend to emphasize occupation as the primary source of personal fulfilment.

Dual-career marriages differ from dual-earner marriages in that in dual-career marriages both spouses are pursuing a career. Stoltz-Loike (1992) found that in dual-career marriages both spouses are highly committed to their careers and view work as essential to their psychological sense of self and as integral to their personal identities. According to Rapaport and Rapoport (1978) a career, as opposed to a job, requires a high degree of commitment and it develops continuously. Arthur and Parker (2004) state that a career provides an important context for self-development and personal identity through which individuals can nurture their passions and become more independent.

Sekaran (1986) found that self-actualization is valued in dual career marriages and that self-actualizing individuals value autonomy and independence. Ozzie and Harriet (2002) found that the autonomy of the spouses in dual-career marriages is a central concern. According to Ozzie and Harriet (2002) men and women are autonomous individuals with wants, hopes, desires, expectations and free will. In order for marriage to succeed there should be respect for the autonomy of each individual.

Although dual-career households are still in the minority they are a growing minority (Hardill & Watson, 2004; Silberstein, 1992). A recent study conducted in America indicates that there are more than 40 million dual-career couples in the work force (Larkin & Ragan, 2008). In the United Kingdom it has been reported that at least 60% of households consist of dual-career couples (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Hardill & Watson, 2004). Although there are no statistics about dual-career marriages in South Africa it seems likely that the South African context would follow international trends.

Studies show that although there are significant benefits to dual-career marriages, such as increased family income and a sense of fulfilment (Larkin & Ragan, 2008), dual-career couples also tend to experience sociological pressures and complications (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Larkin & Ragan 2008). One such complication is that in some marriages wives earn more than their husbands and this can cause strain due to men's traditional role as bread-winners (Betchen, 2006; Larkin & Ragan, 2008). In addition, women in dual-career marriages are expected to break gender roles in families and lead the way towards equality at home, just as they do in

the industrial world (Silberstein, 1992). However, this expectation clearly contradicts socio-cultural and Christian discourses about the roles of women.

Haddock and Zimmerman (2001) have argued that cultural ideologies have been slow to respond to the rise in dual-earner and dual-career marriages. They suggest that until cultural ideologies change to fit new realities, dual-career couples will continue to face unnecessary obstacles. One of the challenges faced in this marital setup is the negotiation of gender expectations in marital relationships.

Betchen (2006) highlights that dual-career couples are potentially vulnerable to power and control struggles, especially when the wife is more financially and professionally successful than the husband. Research conducted from the 1970s through to the 1990s shows that female professionals have higher divorce rates than woman in general (Silberstein, 1992). Existing societal norms and expectations contribute to the women's level of distress and marital dissatisfaction (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1978; Silberstein, 1992). These expectations include the role of a man as the primary bread-winner as well as cultural and Christian expectations such as the woman assuming a submissive role in marriage.

It is further stated by Silberstein (1992) that, according to Parson's theory, dismantling the man's role as provider and as the primary source of family status generally destabilizes marriages. In his theory of social systems Parsons (1991) argues that roles are essential starting points for human interaction and that in order for interactions to be stable roles must be governed by shared rules. According to

social systems theory roles are clearly defined and interruptions to the roles lead to interruptions in stability.

My personal observation as a professional married woman is that within the South African context, and particularly amongst the Black community, the traditional socio-cultural discourse still informs marriages. This is despite the increasing rise of dual-career marriages amongst Black South Africans. Greef and Malherbe (2001) also found that despite the increasing norm for women's employment and the expectation that women should contribute to the family's financial situation, the traditional social assumptions about gender roles continue to enshroud much of South African society's attitudes.

It is argued that non-traditional family members experience several dilemmas and challenges as they go about their daily lives (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Larkin & Ragan, 2008; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1978). Arthur and Parker (2004) state that in dual-career marriages the couple deals with challenges relating to family structures and the loss of community and traditional values. Rapoport and Rapoport (1978) found that dual-career marriages face five major dilemmas: role overload, role cycling, social network dilemmas, identity dilemmas and normative dilemmas. These dilemmas are briefly described below with the addition of more recent sources that concur with Rapoport and Rapoport's (1978) original findings.

2.6.4.1 Role overload

Role overload occurs when specific family members take on several roles. For example, women/wives occupy the so-called second shift at home despite their eight hour day work. The division of household chores has been investigated and results suggest that this factor plays a major role in the level of spouses' satisfaction with marriage. Due to the role overload, employed wives are more likely than fulltime housewives to expect their husbands to share domestic work (Baskin, 2002).

2.6.4.2 Role cycling dilemma

The role cycling dilemma is defined as the strain the marital partners face when they want to have a family and a career at the same time. Research indicates that family and career success can hinge on a young professional's ability, especially the woman's ability, to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Ruben, 2006). In many instances women decide to put their careers on hold while raising a family and then return to work after staying at home. It is argued that regardless of their occupational status, working mothers face challenges in achieving a balanced work and family (Fredman & Greenhaus, 2000). This is especially because traditional values continue to shape the division of labour at home, where women take on or are expected to take on more responsibility for their homes than men.

2.6.4.3 Social network dilemma

Society grooms males and females to behave differently. While a specific behaviour may be seen as socially acceptable when performed by males, it may be seen as unacceptable when performed by women. Spouses in non-traditional families experience internal conflict trying to establish who they are and what they are becoming (Baskin, 2002).

Internalized gender roles and values learned early in life conflict with the acquired non-traditional roles that spouses are trying to establish. For example, career wives experience enhanced self-esteem and self-worth as their careers provide them with opportunities for accomplishment, creativity and self-actualization. This empowers these wives to be autonomous or to regard themselves as autonomous; feelings that are not encouraged by the traditional gendered society. Society generally expects women to be directed by their husbands who are given authority over women. Crossfield et al. (2005) found that wives in dual-career marriages are often inner directed, i.e. they act on their own personal value systems in leading their lives rather than on societal expectations and value systems.

2.6.4.4 The normative dilemma

Despite the major dilemmas faced by women in non-traditional families Rapoport and Rapoport (1978) argue that there are at least four needs that manifest themselves in dual-career homes. These are needs for achievement, affiliation, power, and autonomy. The intensity of these needs changes depending on the

stage of marriage. Marital satisfaction is derived from the need an individual experiences as a particular point in his/her life. Individuals with a need for autonomy are likely to define success as being able to establish their freedom and operate effectively on their own without being subjected to behaviour control. Such individuals would not want to be constantly instructed and rather resist being instructed, watched, controlled, supervised and restricted in any way.

Larkin and Ragan (2008) outline five critical factors for successfully managing dual-career relationships. These factors are mutual commitment to careers, flexibility, coping mechanisms, financial considerations, and energy and time management. The personal flexibility and coping mechanisms factors are particularly relevant to this study and are discussed in detail below.

Personal flexibility is described as the willingness and ability to adapt and improve in dealing with problems faced in dual-career marriages, such as flexibly sharing roles and responsibilities at home (Larkin & Ragan, 2008). This is similar to the findings reported by Coverman (2001) and Ozzie and Harriet (2002). Coping mechanisms can either be learned or unconscious skills through which people deal with minor to major stress and trauma. Coping mechanisms are critical for dual-career couples (Larkin & Ragan, 2008) as they tend to face many challenges and need to have effective coping mechanisms in order to address these challenges. Betchen (2006) refers to the need for adjustment due to the inevitable challenges in dual-career marriages.

2.6.5 Summary and conclusion

The institution of marriage has undergone a lot of change over the past 50 years and this change has resulted in several observable challenges (Carlson & Sperry, 1991; Rall, 1984). In addition, according to Rall (1984) the modern emphasis on individual freedom and personal happiness may be a factor contributing to the challenges faced by most marriages.

The literature constructs dual-earner and dual-career marriages as challenging and as contributing significantly to increased marital dissatisfaction and stress on spouses (Carlson & Sperry, 1991). However, regardless of these findings and stated complexities or challenges marriage remains, in my opinion, one of the most highly valued forms of human association.

The importance of marriage is reflected by the large body of research concerning issues around the concept of marriage. Since the 1990s emphasis is continually placed on understanding the quality of marriage as an end in itself and as a means to understanding its effect on numerous other processes inside and outside the family. Researchers are continuing to explore the discourses informing marriage as a social concept.

The above paragraphs outlined the continuing changes in the roles that women play in society and in families. This thesis explores how these changes contribute to the construction of satisfaction by professional women in marriage. The literature highlights women in dual-career marriages' need for autonomy and this study

explored the participants' perceptions and constructions of autonomy and the ways in which these constructions contribute to their construction of marital satisfaction. The next paragraphs outline some discourses surrounding autonomy.

2.7 The social construction of autonomy

Autonomy is a social construct whose meaning differs based on the context within which it is used. It is defined as an individual's need or right to be in control or to take ownership of his or her life (Le Roux, 1987). It is also defined as the right of all individuals to develop their highest potential (Taylor, 2002) and it is associated with self-esteem (Moneta, 2002). Taylor (2002) further states that each individual has freedom of action, the opportunity to work independently, to make decisions and to take responsibility for their actions. Taylor (2002) indicates that autonomy is sometimes used as an equivalent to liberty, self-rule, self-determination or self-assertion. The dictionary definition of autonomy includes self-rule and volition, to act willingly, without a sense of coercion (Kagitcibasi, 2005).

According to Poortinga (1992) the psychoanalytical orientation has constructed a sense of autonomy and independence from others as essential to healthy human development. As a result psychological theories have also stressed the importance of individual independence, self-efficacy, self-reliance, self-actualization and freedom of choice to the extent that individual independence is perceived as a cherished value in societies such as the United States (Kagitcibasi, 2005).

Autonomy has been positioned by Self-Determination theory (SDT) as one of the basic psychological needs that contributes to human well-being (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan & Kaplan, 2003; Sheldon & Gunz, 2009). The other two psychological needs are relatedness (the need to feel close to and accepted by important others or the need for belongingness) and a need for competence (a need to feel effective, skilful and able to master challenges of life) (Sheldon & Filak, 2008; Sheldon & Gunz, 2009; Vansteenkiste, Lens & Soenens, 2006). According to SDT autonomy can be described as the extent to which one fully accepts and stands behind one's action (Choy, 2002). In this description the issue of taking accountability for one's action is given prominence.

The construct of autonomy is seen as underlying the self, self-other relations and social behaviours. From a self viewpoint it refers to the extent to which a person is subject to his or her own rule, whereas self-other distinction refers to the extent to which one distances oneself from others by defining boundaries of interaction and social behaviour (Kagitcibasi, 2005). It is believed that human beings have a need for autonomy and relatedness and different cultural groups tend to emphasize or prioritize either one or the other (Poortinga, 1992).

Since autonomy and relatedness emphasise different needs they are at times seen as conflicting with each other. While autonomy reflects tendencies toward independence from others, relatedness reflects tendencies towards interdependence or close association with others (Kagitcibasi, 2005). Research has found that the pursuit of autonomy may have either positive or negative social consequences, depending on how the environment trades off the value of individual independence

against the value of social interdependence (Moneta, 2002). For example, it has been found that the pursuit of autonomy hampers the development of satisfying relationships in collectivistic societies (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Autonomy is therefore seen as most promoted in individualistic societies, which also promote the development of an independent, self-reliant and self-efficient self (Mann & Hannover, 2006). Collectivist societies are seen as emphasising the need for interdependence, interconnectedness and belongingness with social in-groups (Bao & Lam, 2008; Moneta, 2002) and thus promoting the development of an interdependent self (Mann & Hannover, 2006). It could be argued that collectivist cultures promote relatedness instead of autonomy. Research findings have questioned the existence of autonomy in collectivistic societies (Lyengar & Lepper, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oishi, 2000).

However, SDT sees autonomy and relatedness as compatible psychological needs that are not mutually exclusive but complementary (Moneta, 2002). According to SDT both autonomy and relatedness are necessary for the well-being and adjustment of all individuals (Sheldon & Gunzl, 2009; Vansteenkister et al., 2006). This suggests that while individuals might have a basic psychological need to have freedom and independence, there is also a need for belongingness and acceptance by social in-groups. It could be argued that regardless of the social standing of human beings both constructs are necessary for individuals' survival and well-being, suggesting a need for people to understand which attribute to lean on in a particular context.

Triandis (1995) argues that while individual autonomy has been closely linked with psychological well-being, psychological well-being is in turn closely related to one's need to feel a sense of belonging. As a result when exercising the right to be autonomous, individuals need to consider the social context within which they operate. Therefore, where a need to belong is important to an individual he or she would need to consider how the need to be autonomous would affect the need to belong. For example, one could argue that in South Africa and particularly amongst Black South Africans there is emphasis on maintaining equilibrium between a need to be autonomous, self-driving and competent and being considerate of others in one's pursuit of autonomy. Such balance or emphasis is illustrated through expressions such as *motho ke motho ka batho* (Sotho language) and *Umuntu ngumtu ngabany' abantu* (Nguni language)[1], which suggest the importance of the collective in one's success or even sense of identity. Another popular concept amongst Black South Africans, which is closely linked to the construct of consideration of others, is that of "Ubuntu", which is considered to be a way of life that has sustained African communities (in South Africa and Africa as a whole) for centuries (Murove, 2009). Ubuntu means humaneness and it refers to a way of being, a disposition that contributes to the well-being of others (Murove, 2009).

While the previous discussion introduced the construct of autonomy and showed how it relates to a sense of belonging, the next paragraphs briefly isolate the various areas related to the construct of autonomy that are relevant to the study.

[1] This means that we are who we are through our association and interactions with other people.

2.7.1 Autonomy and individualism

Individualism is a framework that values individual success and achievement over group success. Within the individualistic framework people are encouraged to be autonomous and to behave independently from others (Harway, 1996). Personal choice, self-expression, attending to personal needs and achievements (Triandis, 1995) are paramount for an individual's sense of well-being within an individualistic framework. The section outlining dual-career marriages also illustrates the importance that professional and educated women place on being independent and fulfilling their personal needs. This need is an individualistic one that is encouraged by institutional discourses such as the education system, the workplace and the legal system.

2.7.2 Autonomy and collectivism

Collectivism as a cultural dimension fosters interdependence, group goals, communal outcomes and group success over individual needs. For collectivists maintaining social relationships and group harmony is of paramount importance (Triandis, 1995). Collectivism thus promotes group consensus and coherence to social or collective norms. In a collectivist culture the self is defined in terms of in-group membership in which shared values, norms, common goals and utilitarian relationships are highly regarded (Harway, 1996). Collectivism is also associated with stable, hierarchical roles that are informed by gender, age and family background (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan & Kaplan, 2003).

Black South African society can be described as a collectivist society in which individuals are more likely to privilege group culture over individual goals (Eaton & Louw, 2000). It is thus not uncommon to find that communication patterns typically reinforce gender inequality (Sullivan, 2006) because the collectivistic framework would construct autonomy as a collective or group autonomy in which a group decides how to govern themselves. As a result an individual's construction of autonomy is informed by the group's construction of how to behave. For example, marriage is a union of two or more individuals who operate in constant interaction with one another. It is therefore a collectivistic micro-system and this implies that within marriage the individuals need to take others into account when they exercise their autonomy.

Research illustrates that married women are expected to relinquish their independence and to abide by the collectivistic systems that promote gender inequality by placing domestic power and decision making in the hands of men (Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2008). It is also found that within collectivist cultures husbands are more likely to maintain the upper hand in decision-making and to be responsible for making major family decisions whereas the wives make decisions concerning day-to-day operations (Bartley et al., 2005). Decision making in marriages is still divided along traditional gender lines (Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2008).

It is clear from the literature reviewed that there are at least two ways in which autonomy can be constructed. One construction reflects an individual's need to be in control of his/her own life, while the other reflects an individual's autonomy as

defined by others. In support of the preceding arguments concerning autonomy Christman (1989) argues that each person is autonomous at a given time and the degree to which an individual is autonomous depends on the context within which they are operating at a specific time

2.7.3 The gender discourse and autonomy

Women's autonomy is embedded in the broader context of gender ideology, which is influenced by the ideology of patriarchal authority. Previous sections discussing cultural and Christian discourses on marriage have illustrated how the dominant patriarchal gender ideology has awarded men the privilege of being in power, which includes dominating and having authority over women. Hoesen (2000) argues that in the past women have lived under the shadow of men and as a result some men still think that they should have full control of women.

Given the dominance of patriarchal society it was not surprising that throughout the literature search a significant proportion of articles addressed women's autonomy in relation to their own bodies and reproductive rights (Bobak & Saleem, 2005; Jejeebhoy, 1995; LeRoux, 1987). Issues around power, decision-making and independence receive little attention and are often not considered at all. According to Bobak and Saleem (2005) and LeRoux (1987) women's autonomy is limited and discussions on autonomy are also related to behaviour associated with roles of women such as the bearing of children.

Based on the literature I concluded that that autonomy of women is largely socially constructed. While patriarchal gender ideology strives to limit the extent of women's autonomy, the growth in industrialization encourages or allows women to be independent and autonomous (Allen, 1999; Karney & Thomas, 1997).

2.7.4 The legal discourse and autonomy

In theory, South African women are encouraged and supported by the legal system, which allows them to be autonomous, independent, and educated. The South African Bill of Rights - sections 7 to 39 - of the 1996 Constitution enshrines the rights of all people in the country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom (Constitutional Court). Furthermore, although the South African Bill of Rights is all encompassing, section 9 of the constitution specifically gives women the right to equality. Following the post-1994 election period women in South Africa are entitled to be treated as equal to men and women are further empowered and encouraged to make independent decisions. The legal discourse constructs women's autonomy as equal to men's autonomy and women are given the platform to be in control of their lives and to be independent.

2.7.5 Christian discourse and autonomy

Christian discourse constructs women as powerless and contains the expectation that a married woman should be submissive to her husband. The discourse prevents women from behaving autonomously as they are expected to be

submissive and under the authority of their husbands. For example, in the Good News Bible in Ephesians 5:22-24 it is stated that "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, for a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church…And so wives must submit completely to their husbands".

2.7.6 The marital discourse and autonomy

Marriage involves the unification of at least two individuals. Although an individual entering a marital relationship has a right to self-govern, to take responsibility for the self and even to aspire to self-actualization, that individual does not act in isolation, but rather in a context that involves the other. It is my experience that for Black South Africans that interaction usually involves extended family members as a result of the understanding that when a woman gets married she is married to a family. Research has also found that, consistent with their culture, extended family members play a role in the marital affairs of Black South Africans (see Amoateng, Heaton & Kalule-Sabiti, 1997; Nzimande, 1987; Wilson, 1986; Ziehl, 1994).

Sekaran (1986) states that a marital relationship should ideally allow both partners to be self-actualizing. Thus, by implication marriage 'should' allow partners to be autonomous. In marriage autonomy is defined as the spouses' perception of the extent to which partners encourage a sense of independence and individuality for each other (Baucom, Burnet, Epstein, Rankin-Esquire & Sandin, 2001). According to Ozzie and Harriet (2002), the autonomy of marital partners is of central concern in determining marital success. For these authors a marriage is a social unit created

by autonomous individuals and for the marriage to succeed there should be respect for the autonomy of each individual.

Based on the above discussion the question could be asked: Is it possible for an individual in marriage to be fully autonomous and to self-govern? It is also possible to ask: Can one be fully autonomous within a marital context? These questions were posed during the analysis and interpretation of the data, which is discussed in the later Chapters of the thesis.

I believe that in order to fully understand and appreciate the concept of autonomy within the context of marriage, it is vital to acknowledge that marriage involves both an individual and a group, i.e. at least two individuals and often their extended family members and community. The concept of autonomy in marriage should therefore be seen as existing on a continuum. The one end of the continuum ideally needs to acknowledge individual autonomy while the other end of the continuum needs to acknowledge group autonomy.

The various discourses presented thus far illustrate the difference in perceptions concerning autonomy. While the legal and the broader social context expect professional women to be autonomous, other contexts such as culture and religion do not have the same expectations. It would seem likely that all these contradictions would create confusion and difficulty for professional women in dual-career marriages. The analysis Chapter provides an account of how the professional women who participated in this study deal with the various constructions in their marital system.

2.7.7 Summary and conclusion

The preceding discussions illustrate the difficulties involved in conceptualizing autonomy in linear terms. The discussion shows that one cannot completely practice individualistic autonomy as we all live amongst other individuals. Autonomy is a social construct and therefore people articulate different grounds for autonomy, bearing in mind the context of behaviour. Christman (1989) indicates that all people are autonomous at a given time.

My understanding is that although an individual can individually decide on a life-style to follow, this decision is always informed by the context within which the individual operates. Society promotes both individualistic and collectivistic autonomy depending on the context. Meaning is constructed through interaction and reality is the result of the social processes accepted as normal in a specific context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

I am of the opinion that the concept of autonomy in marriage can only be appreciated if it is seen from both an individualistic and a collectivistic perspective. Furthermore, I believe that societies as macro-systems and marriages as micro-systems cannot be rigidly differentiated as being either individualistic or collectivistic. It is, however, possible that different societies and marital setups emphasize different aspects of the two constructs in human interaction, based on cultural norms, values and interests.

In dual-career marriages (where power is ideally shared by both spouses) both spouses need to redefine already existing normative behaviour. Couples can decide on when they should practice individualistic autonomy and when collectivistic autonomy is necessary. Once this decision has been made it might be possible to be autonomous within a collective setting (which also contradicts the basic definition of autonomy). This is paradoxical because is suggests that one can be autonomous in marriage but not fully autonomous.

Autonomy in the marital relationship depends on the outcome of diverse processes taking place in the context of the marriage and is embedded in the broader social environment. This in turn contributes to the way in which women and society in general interpret and experience autonomy. These broader social and individual constructions are context bound and may vary from individual to individual and from community to community. All these aspects of autonomy are discussed in the analysis of the text that is presented in the later Chapters of the thesis.

2.8 Marital satisfaction

The increasing amount of research interest in marital satisfaction since the period of industrialization illustrates the importance placed on understanding marriage as an end in itself and as a means to understanding its effect on the broader society (Bradbury, Fincham & Stevens, 2000). The study of marital satisfaction could also assist in developing effective interventions for couples presenting with marital dissatisfaction and/or challenges. In this section the concept of satisfaction is first discussed in order to provide a backdrop for the discussion of marital satisfaction.

Satisfaction is a component of psychological well-being and it reflects how people evaluate their lives. Such evaluations may be in the form of cognitions (i.e. when a person gives conscious evaluative judgments about his/her satisfaction in general or about specific aspects of their lives), or it may be associated with the frequency with which people experience pleasant or/and unpleasant emotions (Bradbury & Cobb, 2003). The evaluation of one's life as either satisfying or unsatisfying indicates that satisfaction is a social construct. Satisfaction is a result of our evaluation of our lives, which is informed by how we experience our lives through social interaction.

Satisfaction can be related to various domains of life such as recreation, love, marriage and friendship. These domains can be divided into narrow facets like marital satisfaction (Diener, Oishi & Suh, 1997). This statement further confirms that satisfaction is an outcome of social interaction. Satisfaction is therefore socially situated and is relative within a particular social relationship. For example, it is not possible to say that one is not satisfied without specifying over whom or what.

Diener et al. (1997) argue that studying the narrow facets of satisfaction assists researchers in gaining a greater understanding of the specific conditions that might influence well-being in other domains. Bradbury and Cobb (2003) argue that in order to understand behaviour we need to consider the broader context in which such behaviour occurs. In this study satisfaction was studied within the broader context of marriage. Marriage in turn exists within the broader context of society and cultures.

This thesis focused on the interpersonal processes that operate within marriages, within a specific timeframe (significant life event or life cycle) and within the socio-

cultural ecologies and contexts within which marriages operate. The aim was to retain a strong focus on understanding the interpersonal variable of autonomy and its significance in the discourse of marital satisfaction within the context of dual-career marriages.

2.8.1 Overview of marital satisfaction

McCabe (1999) argues that while previous research focused more on divorce in marriages there has been a shift towards understanding satisfaction in marriages. Astone, Kim, Rothert, Schoen and Standish (2002) found that satisfaction is important in marriages and that marital satisfaction is the central variable that reflects the marital quality. According to Rhyne (1991) marital satisfaction is sought or expected by most married individuals. He argues that it is crucial to continue studying factors that contribute to marital satisfaction since marriage is central to individual and family well-being. A study conducted by Carlson and Sperry (1991) found that marital satisfaction is at its highest when the marital experiences of each spouse match his or her expectations.

Marital satisfaction is informed by various social discourses and as such it is socially constructed. These discourses include personality differences or personal qualities, educational status, power sharing, role division, sexuality and conflict resolution (McCabe, 1999). According to Campel (1976) marital satisfaction is a construction based on what people perceive as appropriate. This implies that marital satisfaction results from an individual's feelings of fulfilment within the context of marriage. For

example, if one expects to be autonomous in a marital setup, then the lack of autonomy might result in dissatisfaction.

Rhyne (1991) states that personal qualities such as educational status, income and age play a less significant role in perceptions of marital satisfaction than subjective and interpersonal relations. Subjective issues would include perceptions of autonomy, which are explored in this study. Significant life events also influence an individual's general level of satisfaction and within the family setup life cycles contribute to marital satisfaction (Applegate & Fowers, 1996).

Esquer, Burnett, Baucom and Norman (1997) found that spouses that report satisfactory interpersonal interactions such as being respected and being treated fairly generally also reported their marriage as satisfactory. Al-Krenawi and Lev-Wiesel (1999) found that the more women perceived equal treatment in their marriages, the higher their level of marital satisfaction. They also found that marital dissatisfaction is high amongst highly educated women.

2.8.2 Autonomy and marital satisfaction

The previous discussions illustrated that each individual has a right to be autonomous and that most individuals aspire for satisfaction in most aspects of their lives. In marriage autonomy and marital satisfaction are informed by individuals' constructions of what is ideal, based on their expectations when they commit to marriage.

The literature search showed that few studies have focused on autonomy in marriage or autonomy and marital satisfaction. The few studies that have been conducted indicated that autonomy is one of the discourses that inform marital satisfaction (Ozzie & Harriet, 2002; Rankin-Esquire, Burnett, Baucom & Epstein, 1997). Bradbury et al. (2000) found that autonomy contributes to marital satisfaction in women.

Ozzie and Harriet (2002) found that a marriage will only succeed where there is respect for the autonomy of each individual. Respect is generally associated with equality and it has been found that in dual-career marriages a sense of equality between the spouses contributes to marital satisfaction (Kiger et al., 2001).

Trumbach (1978) argues that marriage provides socio-psychological support for individuals and that marriage creates a sense of order for the individual which allows them to experience their lives as making sense. By implication if experiencing autonomy makes sense to a woman, marriage should legitimate, mediate and allow the realisation of such a perception (Trumbach, 1978). On the contrary I have found that marriages amongst Black South Africans often fail to do so because, despite all the changes in women's roles in society at large, these marriages are still subject to traditional expectations. The marriage context seems to be resisting the change that is being created by the larger social context. This resistance may result in constant stress and marital dissatisfaction.

This study explored how constructions of autonomy contribute to constructions of marital satisfaction for women in dual-career marriages. The findings of this study

show how participants from a specific culture and tradition construct meaning in their lives.

2.8.3 Dual career marriage and marital satisfaction

Since the industrial revolution many social scientists have investigated marital satisfaction amongst working women and their husbands. This interest is related to the fact that dual-earner and dual-career marriages bring into question traditional gender norms and traditional understandings of marital satisfaction (Hochschild, 1990; Kiger & Riley, 2000).

Over the last few decades family life styles have changed, with dual-career marriages increasing in number (Blaine & Brooks, 1996). Women are increasingly pursuing goals and ambitions beyond the traditional female roles of wife and mother (Johnson, 1996). These women are empowered to be autonomous and independent and therefore do not expect to have to behave in submissive and dependent ways. McCabe (1999) also reports that the changes in female work roles as well as responsibilities in families have impacted on marital satisfaction.

The increasing employment rates of women, the rate at which women are pursuing careers and the increase in educational achievement amongst women, all result in women experiencing an increasing need for freedom and status (Carlson & Sperry, 1991). According to these researchers the changing position of women has resulted in increased freedom of choice for women. However, this freedom has also resulted

in an increased level of marital stress, which in turn contributes to higher divorce rates.

Previous research conducted in the United States indicates that more than 50% of marriages currently end and will continue to end in divorce (Larson & Olson, 1989; Rhyne, 1991); that about a third of divorces occur within the first two to four years of marriage; and that marital satisfaction within the first ten years has declined since the 1970s and continues to decline (Silberstein, 1992). Although these sources are fairly old more recent sources (e.g. Kiger & Riley, 2000) show similar trends.

Research findings show that men tend to be more satisfied in marriages than women (Blaine & Brooks, 1996). In my opinion this variance could be due to the fact that men are given power in marriages and are thus likely to be satisfied. It is also possible that men and women assess their marriages differently. Research shows that a husband's dissatisfaction in marriage is linked to two factors: Firstly, from the feeling that their wives are less available for them; and secondly, when their wives are more successful in their careers than they are (Johnson, 1996). In contrast, women report dissatisfaction due to the continuing gender biases existing within the marital setup, including division of domestic labour, autonomy and decision making. According to Johnson (1996) wives' commitment to their careers may be a contributing factor to their dissatisfaction with the marriage system.

2.9 Conclusion

This Chapter illustrated how people come to construct their reality and shape their behaviour. Through the use of language people construct meaning and define what is acceptable in their interaction. For example, cultural practices are a result of the collective agreements about several issues, including what constitutes appropriate behaviour for a married woman.

The literature findings on the social constructs under investigation in this study illustrate the socially constructed nature of institutions, for example marriage is an institution that is governed by rules and regulations. The construction of behaviour in marriage is regulated by the Christian and the cultural discourses. These discourses endorse the position of a married woman as subservient and do not expect a married woman to be independent. However, the legal discourse enshrined in the South African constitution endorses equality in marriage, thereby constructing the position of a married woman as equal to that of her husband.

On the construct of autonomy the literature indicates that an individual's construction of autonomy differs from one context to the next. As individuals people are allowed to behave independently and make autonomous decisions. However, in contexts that involve other people a more collective approach is encouraged. In such contexts individuals are expected to compromise their individualistic operations in order to accommodate or prioritize group success.

The reviewed literature indicates that most married individuals seek marital satisfaction and that marital satisfaction is a central variable reflecting the quality of marriage. Investigations concerning autonomy and marital satisfaction indicate that individuals who experience or report greater autonomy in marriage also report greater satisfaction.

The Chapter that follows discusses the methodology that was used in conducting this research. The rationale for choosing the methodology is outlined. In addition, the process that was used in selecting the participants and gathering the data is also outlined. In addition, the Chapter discusses the method of data analysis and focuses on the importance of the construct of reflexivity within the research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the description of the research process. It provides information concerning the method that was used in undertaking this research as well as a justification for the use of this method. The Chapter also describes the various stages of the research, which includes the selection of participants, the data collection process and the process of data analysis. The Chapter also discusses the role of the researcher in qualitative research in relation to reflexivity. The Chapter ends with a discussion of validity and reliability in qualitative research and discusses the way in which these two requirements were met in the current study.

This research explored the challenges faced by married women in dual-career marriages. The interaction between the researcher and the participants consisted of a dialogue where both shared similar experiences and where multiple truths were investigated (Matsumoto, 1996; Olson, 1996). This is also in accordance with the feminist approach to conducting research. The researcher drew on feminist theory to inform certain aspects of this study within a broader social constructionist paradigm. The purpose of this research was to understand the construction of autonomy and marital satisfaction by professional women in dual-career marriages.

3.2 Research methodology

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) a research methodology or strategy is determined by the nature of the research question and the subject being investigated. As a result the research format used in an investigation should be seen as a tool to answer the research question. This thesis aimed at exploring and understanding the meanings constructed by the participants. The study did not aim to provide the ultimate truth about the research topic but rather to investigate a particular way of looking at and deriving meaning on the phenomenon under investigation. This study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do professional women in dual-career marriages construct their marriages?
- How do the participants construct their autonomy in their marriages?
- How does their understanding of marriage and their construction of autonomy in their marriages inform their construction of marital satisfaction?

A qualitative research approach was chosen as the methodology because this approach reinforces an understanding and interpretation of meaning as well as intentions underlying human interaction. Data was collected using in-depth interviews. The next paragraphs outline a detailed justification for selecting the specific approaches and methods.

3.3 Justification for using qualitative research

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as a multifaceted research method involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to subject matter. The multifaceted nature of qualitative research enables researchers to develop a holistic picture of the phenomenon in question. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) provide the following principles that underlie qualitative research:

- Qualitative research is holistic; it looks at the larger picture and begins with a search for understanding of the whole.
- Qualitative research looks at the relationships within a system.
- Qualitative research focus on understanding a given social setting, not necessarily on making predictions about that setting.
- Qualitative research demands time consuming analysis; it requires ongoing analysis of the data.
- Qualitative research design requires the researcher to become the research instrument. It also incorporates room for description of the researcher's own biases and ideological preferences.
- Qualitative research design incorporates informed consent decisions and is responsive to ethical concerns.

In qualitative research the objective is exploratory and descriptive rather than explanatory (Ferreirra, Mouton, Puth, Schurink & Schurink, 1998). The descriptive nature of qualitative research allows the researcher to provide a description of the experiences of the participants, which will either sustain or confront the theoretical

assumptions on which the study is based (Meyer, 2001). The descriptive nature of qualitative research enables readers to understand the meaning attached to the experience, the distinct nature of the problem and the impact of the problem (Meyer, 2001).

Qualitative research was deemed suitable for this research project as the purpose of this study was to explore the views of a group of professional married women. The research aim was to explore a particular meaning without presenting the findings as the absolute truth but as one way in which dual-career marriages are constructed. Discourse analysis was used to identify the various constructions regarding marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction that are presented in this study.

In line with the research principles outlined in the preceding paragraphs this research aimed at understanding the experiences of Black professional women in dual-career marriages within the South African context. Sufficient time was spent analyzing the data to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the way in which the participants construct meaning. The researcher consciously guarded against presenting her personal experiences, and attempted to remain aware of her own biases and experiences.

The current research is heuristic, since it aimed to bring new understanding and meaning to the topic of dual-career marriage amongst Black professionals within the South African context. As illustrated in Chapter 2, most studies concerning dual-career and dual-earner marriages have focused on concepts such as labour division, gender identity, sex, and power. Very little research has focused on concepts such

as autonomy. In order to ensure a heuristic character, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that:

- The researcher uses a holistic approach where all parts of the problem are explored with the search for understanding of the whole.
- The research looks at relationships within a system or culture which, in the present study, entails the exploration of women's role according to traditional norms and the changing position of women.
- The research approach is personal. In this study the personal experiences of each participant were investigated.
- The focus is on understanding the problem under investigation instead of making predictions about it.

Within the tradition of qualitative research, there are three broad categories of data collection: participant observation; interviewing; and the use of personal documents (Mouton & Marais, 1991). In the present study, interviews were used as the main method of data collection. An unstructured interview approach was adopted and this approach facilitated an understanding of the problem from the perspective of the participants under investigation. In Appendix B the first six interview transcripts are provided to in order to give an overview of some of the questions that were asked during the interviews (the transcripts are presented in unedited form).

3.3.1 Justification for using interviews

Potter (1996) argues that interviews are valuable tools for collecting data in qualitative research. A one-on-one interview method allows the researcher to

interact with the participants and to observe non-verbal cues during the interview process. In this study an unstructured interview method was used to allow for an open, in-depth discussion of the research topic. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue that unstructured interviews allow the researcher to understand the complexity of the situation without imposing any prior categorization.

Through choosing interviews as a method of data collection the researcher hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' constructions through dialogue and through the language they use in constructing the different discourses. The interview method allows the researcher to seek clarity and probe for deeper understanding. As a result the reporting and analysis of data is reflective of the views of the participants. The researcher herself was in a dual-career marriage at the time of the research and she was therefore able to share her own experiences with the participants, thus placing herself as equal to the participants. In this way the researcher was able to build trust and rapport with the participants and the trust in the interaction or relationship made it somewhat easier for the participants to share their own experiences without fear of being judged (Stanley, 1990).

3.3.2 Sampling

When conducting research many types of sampling are possible, although researchers in qualitative research usually focus on relatively small samples (Lyell, 1998). Research participants are generally selected because they are able to provide rich descriptions of their experiences and are willing to articulate their experiences, thereby providing information that is rich and which will be able to

challenge and enrich the researcher's understanding (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Hutchinson & Wilson, 1991). Two non-probability sampling approaches were used to select the participants for this study. The sampling method was a combination of judgment and snowball techniques. The researcher specifically selected participants who would be able to contribute to the research topic and who would be willing to share their experiences in dual-career marriages (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

The researcher initially approached potential participants that were known to her. This was done by actively selecting participants who met the criteria for inclusion in the study (Marshall, 1996), i.e. Black South African women in dual-career marriages. The first four participants were therefore known to the researcher, and all fulfilled the following criteria:

- Black South African women
- Married for at least one year and not more than five years. This criterion was included because research suggests that most challenges and divorces in marriage occur within the first few years of marriage (Silberstein, 1992).
- Within an age range of 25 to 35. This would make it easy for both the researcher and the participants to relate to each other as the researcher was 30 years old at the time of data collection.
- In dual-career marriages and professionals in senior positions.

The sample was then expanded by asking the identified participants to refer other professional women known to them who might be willing to provide relevant input on the research topic. This is known as snowball sampling (Marshall, 1996). These

potential participants were approached by the researcher and those that fulfilled the criteria and were willing to participate in the study were subsequently interviewed.

In qualitative research the exact number of participants cannot be specified before the study is conducted. In qualitative research the number of participants is informed by the extent to which the research question has been addressed (Marshall, 1996; McLeod, 2002). When data reaches a point of saturation, i.e. when new themes stop emerging, the researcher can conclude that there is no need for more interviews (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1991; Marshall, 1996; Orbele, 2002).

The number of participants interviewed in this study was therefore not pre-determined but was determined by the information gained during the various interviews. Interviews were conducted until the data reached an acceptable saturation point and the researcher judged that the research question could be answered adequately. In total 11 interviews were conducted and it was found that by the sixth interview little new information was being gained. However, additional interviews were conducted to ensure that saturation point had indeed been reached. The last interviews confirmed the information gained in previous interviews and thus demonstrated that the information gathered had reached a point of saturation. It was at this stage that the researcher decided to conclude the interviewing process and proceed to analysis.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

Given the importance of ethics in conducting research and the challenges around conducting research, universities go to great lengths to protect the dignity and safety of research participants (Silverman, 2009). The Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria has over the past few years introduced a Research Ethics Committee whose aim is to ensure that ethical requirements are adhered to when research is conducted. However, at the time the current research was initiated and registered the Faculty Ethics Committee was not in existence. Therefore, this research was not approved by an ethics committee. However, the proposal for the research was approved by committees in the Department of Psychology. Although following a formal ethical procedure (e.g. gaining written consent from participants) was not required the researcher ensured that research ethics were adhered to during the research process.

Several ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure that the study was conducted in an appropriate manner (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). To comply with ethical considerations in conducting research all participants provided verbal consent to be interviewed and to participate in the research. The participants therefore willingly participated in the study after they were approached by the researcher (Leedy, 2000; Neuman, 2000) and the research purpose and process were explained to them. While it is common practice to request written consent, Silverman (2009) states that highly formalized ways of securing consent should be avoided in favour of fostering relationships in which ongoing ethical regard for participants is sustained. In this study verbal consent was deemed appropriate. In

support of this form of consent Fritz (2008) has argued that the strength of qualitative research often lies in the informality of the communication as well as the interactive nature of the research process. The consent form that was used as a guideline for the research/consent process is attached as Appendix A.

The purpose of the research was explained to the participants and the participants were told that should they wish to withdraw at any point during the interview they could do so. Permission to record the interview was also obtained from the participants and none of the participants had difficulties with the tape recording of the interviews.

It was further explained to the participants that their information would remain confidential and that the specific content of individual interviews would only be discussed with the supervisor (at that stage the late Prof J.B. Schoeman). The supervisor and the participants were unknown to each other. In the final report the identity of the participants was removed and pseudonyms were used for the participants.

As a result of the personal nature of the content of the research interview, the researcher found it appropriate to emphasize the confidentiality of the information and to establish trust with the participants in the early phase of the interviews. While sharing the purpose of the study with the participants the researcher also shared her background and some of her personal stories as a professional woman in a dual-career marriage. This helped to build trust and in turn encouraged the participants to share their stories.

At the end of the interviews, both the participants and the researcher debriefed by talking about the interview process itself and the impact of the interview. The aim of the debriefing was to ensure that the participants were not left emotionally harmed or traumatized from the interview. Although it was interesting to note that the participants stated that they enjoyed the interviews, it is also important to note that the participants were offered psychological counselling should they need it at any time after the research. None of the participants requested psychological intervention following the research.

The observable benefits of the study were immediate as the participants stated that they had enjoyed the conversations. The participants all appeared to engage freely in the conversations and this indicates that that the interview process allowed the participants to share their stories in a safe environment and without being judged. This experience itself could have been 'therapeutic' for some of the participants as it allowed them to give voice to their experiences, this is particularly salient in a society where women's voices are marginalized and silenced (Motsemme, 2002).

As outlined in Chapter 1 the researcher hopes that this study will add to the sparse literature on dual-career marriage in both South African and international literature. It is also hoped that the findings, although they cannot be generalized, will add value to society in general by providing insights on the challenges faced by Black professional women in South Africa and thereby enable society at large to understand these experiences.

3.4 Data collection process

Qualitative research emphasizes the importance of context in analyzing data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). During the research process and especially during the data collection phase, the participants were able to decide on the venue for their interviews. As a result each participant was interviewed at a venue chosen by her and at the time that was convenient to her. The participants were interviewed either at their homes or at their place of work. Most of the participants indicated a preference for the interviews to take place at their place of work.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher and were all conducted in English, although there were times when participants would use their home language, either Northern or Southern Sotho, to express some idioms. Although the participants' home language was not English their command of the language is good due to their education and professional status. Conducting the interviews in English allowed the researcher to transcribe the interviews as presented by the participants without translating the interviews. However, in instances where the participants expressed themselves in a language other than English this information was translated during the transcription stage. The researcher thought it necessary to translate all the interview material into English so that the data would be accessible to people who do not speak Northern or Southern Sotho.

During the interviews the researcher treated all participants with respect (Mouton & Marais, 1991). Given the researcher's background it was easy for her to identify with the participants' responses although she guarded against imposing her own view on

the participants. The social location of the researcher and the participants in terms of their race, gender, social status played a pivotal role in shaping the research process (Edwards, 1990; Orbele, 2002). As a result of the similar social background of the researcher and the participants it was easier for the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and create a safe environment where the participants could construct the meaning of their experiences without feeling that they were being judged.

Once the participants agreed to be interviewed, an appointment was made with each participant at the time convenient to both themselves and the interviewer. The interviews took place at the participants' places of work or at their homes depending on what was suitable for the participants. The background of the research was explained to the participants as well as the ethical considerations relating to participation.

The researcher did not adopt an expert position and was transparent with the participants, which allowed them to easily talk about their experiences. She placed herself in the same position as the participants as someone who is also experiencing some challenges in her marriage as a result of her professional status (Edwards, 1990). She explained to the participants that the research was prompted by the challenges that she faced in her marriage and the way in which these challenges were shaping her construction of marriage, without providing unnecessary details. It was found that this transparency helped put the participants at ease and also helped with the disclosure of information. In keeping with the feminist research approach to

collecting data an empathic connection was created between the researcher and the participants (Matsumoto, 1996).

The only interview question that was pre-formulated was the opening question which was: “As a Black professional married woman tell me about your experiences in marriage?” The interviews were relatively unstructured with the researcher beginning with the same broad question for each participant while allowing subsequent questions to be guided by the conversation between the researcher and each participant. All participants were interviewed by the researcher herself and all interviews were recorded on an audiotape.

The participants were allowed to speak freely in their own terms about the phenomenon in question (Mouton & Marais, 1991). Through using unstructured interviews the researcher was able to follow particularly interesting avenues of conversation that emerged in the interview. The participant was treated as an expert and was allowed to make the most of the opportunity to tell her story. As a result the researcher was able to relate to the participants in subjective ways on their terms rather than on the researcher’s terms (Edwards, 1990).

Although the interviews were conversational in nature the nature of the topic meant that it was not easy for some of the participants to be fully open and transparent about their marriages. The researcher sensed that some of the participants were screening or filtering the information they provided. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter the researcher deliberately allowed the participants to volunteer information and when they were seen as holding back such behaviour was not

questioned as the researcher did not want to enter into a therapeutic role with the participants.

The interview style was based on the following qualitative research interview method described by Neuman (2000):

- Questions are tailored to the participant's situation.
- The interviewer showed interest in responses and encouraged elaboration.
- An interview is like a friendly conversational exchange but with slightly more direction from the interviewer.
- An interview is interspersed with jokes, aside stories and diversion which are also recorded.
- Open-ended questions are used and probes are frequent.
- Interviewer and participant jointly control the pace and direction of the interview.
- The interviewer adjusts to the participant's norms and language usage.

As described in a previous section the interviews were guided by the participants' responses and the direction of the research was thus mutually guided by the researcher and the participants. It was easy for the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and to engage in a conversation with them about the subject of investigation because the researcher herself shares a similar marital background. The researcher was also in a dual-career marriage and as a result there were times where both the researcher and the participants engaged in jokes around the dual-career marital context.

The interviews were conducted over a period of four months. Initially six interviews were conducted in conjunction with the period of reviewing the literature. During the literature review and when the data analysis stage began a need to conduct additional interviews became evident. The additional interviews were conducted to see whether the new themes identified in the literature and the analysis of data would surface in the additional interviews. The average length of the interviews was approximately one hour. Given the researcher's pivotal role in the research, as well as her disclosure of personal information to the participants the discussion that follows in the next section focuses on the role of the researcher in qualitative research, in other words reflexivity.

3.5 Reflexivity in qualitative research

Within both post-structuralist and post-modern theories the researcher is seen as part of the research methodology (Matsumoto, 1996; Miller, 2000). Similarly in qualitative research the researcher plays a fundamental role as an instrument of data collection (Creswell, 1994) and data interpretation. Seroka (1999) states that qualitative research is an interactive process that cannot be value-free and therefore the orthodox idea that interviews should be neutral is not possible. Parker (1994) argues that any piece of research is undertaken by subjective individuals and this subjectivity needs to be acknowledged. He further argues that when a researcher acknowledges this subjectivity he or she is able to account for what has led him or her to investigate the subject.

Gee (1999) states that the researcher as an interviewer in qualitative research plays an important role in how the interviewees construct their reality. The researcher's outlook on life, his/her life experiences and observations have a high likelihood of influencing the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. Seroka (1999) states that the ideal qualitative researcher becomes immersed in the phenomenon of interest and his or her bias should be made transparent (Parker, 1994). Similarly Miller (2000) states that interviews should be treated as a piece of social interaction whereby the researcher's contribution is as interesting as that of the interviewees.

The researcher in this research project is a professional married woman who has her own experiences regarding autonomy and marital satisfaction. Although the introductory Chapter outlines the experiences, values and beliefs of the researcher, these are also briefly detailed below since they are closely linked to the concept of reflexivity.

The researcher married as a young, independent, professional working woman and she has since been a co-contributor to the running of the household and assists in maintaining the life style in her marriage. However, based on cultural and Christian norms she is also expected to adopt a submissive and less powerful role in the marriage. The researcher has found that as a professional, she would have been more comfortable if principles of egalitarianism were adopted in the marriage, where there is equal sharing of power, roles and decision making in marriage. This is especially important because with the changing role of women in marriages, women are becoming equally important in maintaining family household.

Given this background it was easy for the researcher to identify with and understand the different constructions being presented by the participants, both as a result of her being a married woman and also because she is a Christian and operates within a marital context dominated by particular cultural norms and expectations. Matsumoto (1996) argues that women who conduct research based on their own experiences have a better understanding of the dynamics and play of social relationships that inform the situation under investigation. However, while the researcher acknowledges that she could identify with the participants she made sure that she did not impose her values or opinions on the participants during the interviews.

Burns (2006) argues that reflexivity allows the researcher to arrive at an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon under investigation. This implies that the researcher is able to draw on his or her own experiences during the research process to enable him or her to understand and identify with what is being said. However, despite the use of the researcher's own experiences and viewpoints the focus of the investigation or research remains on understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher therefore has to put aside her own understanding of the subject of investigation and open her mind to understand and listen to what is told to her by the participants.

During the analysis phase the researcher was able to draw on her understanding of the Christian and cultural discourses to substantiate what the participants were saying. At the same time it was important for the researcher to continuously reflect

on her position in the research process and to remain focused on the content of the interviews. More will be said about this in the section on reliability and validity.

3.6 Data analysis

Mouton and Marais (1991) describe data analysis as the process whereby a phenomenon is broken down into its constituent parts in order for it to be understood better. In the social constructionist paradigm the method of discourse analysis has become common practice (Burns, 2006). In this research a discourse analysis methodology was used to analyze data and to understand the conditions behind a specific problem. In doing so this research identified versions of autonomy and marital satisfaction from the participants' viewpoint rather than providing an absolute answer to the problem.

McLeod (2002) argues that discourse analysis has become a preferred methodology for qualitative researchers in South Africa. She states that discourse analysis was cited as the research methodology for only one article in the *South African Journal of Psychology* from 1990 to 1994, but was cited in 12 articles in the same journal from 1995 to 2000. Although McLeod (2002) does not provide reasons for the popularity of discourse analytic methodologies in South Africa it is possible to hypothesize that postmodern research's support for multiple perspectives and multiple constructed identities fits comfortably with South Africa's diverse society.

The first part of the deliberation on the research outcome focuses on providing an overview of the theoretical background of discourse analysis. This is followed by a discussion of the actual process of data analysis used in this study.

3.7 Discourse analysis

A discourse is referred is a form of language, ideas or philosophical system of statements that produce a particular version of events (Burr, 1995; Parker, 1990). Through interaction and in using language people produce versions of particular events and thereby create their reality. Different people might therefore have different versions of the same event. These versions of reality are referred to by discourse analysts as interpretative repertoires or metaphors (Potter, 1996). In this study discourse analysis was used to understand how participants construct meaning about marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction.

Discourse analysis as an approach stems from post-modern and post-structural understandings of reality (O'Connor, 2006) both of which are discussed in detailed in Chapter 2. These theoretical perspectives argue that there are multiple realities and as a result any aspect of social reality can be understood from multiple perspectives. Post-modern and post-structural frameworks argue that there are various ways of interpreting text and therefore no single meaning is universal. There is thus also no single prescribed method for conducting a discourse analysis, different approaches can be used such as social constructionist, psychoanalytic, linguistic and post-structuralist approaches to discourse analysis (McLeod, 2002). The analysis in this study adopted the guidelines provided by Parker (1992), which are informed by the

work of Michel Foucault. In the next paragraphs Parker's (1992) summary guideline for conducting discourse analysis is outlined.

Discourse analysis is concerned with investigating how meaning is derived from a given text. The advantage of discourse analysis is that it takes into account the different ways of reasoning on an issue without needing to establish the correctness of any one perspective (O'Connor, 2006). O'Connor further argues that the method is reflective and open minded and it therefore does not attempt to develop a particular dominant view. Discourse analysis rather creates an awareness of a situation and is regarded as the mode through which the world of reality emerges (McLeod, 2002).

It is argued further that discourse analysis is a way of interpreting and attaching meaning to the different ways of talking so that discourse can be understood better, by accessing the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind a text (O'Connor, 2006; Taylor, Wetherell & Yates, 2001). Discourse analysis is referred to by others as deconstructive reading (Harre', Smith & Van Langeheven, 1995) and is concerned with identifying the hidden meaning and justification behind a text (Parker, 1992).

For Parker (1992) discourse analysis is therefore a deliberate way of systematizing what is said so that it can be understood better. Any discourse would therefore be understood in relation to the context within which it is communicated. McLeod (2002) and Parker (1992) provide seven criteria for distinguishing discourse. These

criteria were followed in this study and were used to identify the discourses that informed the participants' construction of their reality. These criteria are:

1. *A discourse is realized in text*
2. *A discourse is about objects*
3. *A discourse contains subjects*
4. *A discourse is a coherent system of meanings*
5. *A discourse refers to other discourses*
6. *A discourse reflects its own way of speaking*
7. *A discourse is historically located*

Discourse can therefore be seen as being a result of content, which in turn involves the subject of the content and the way in which meaning is constructed in order to make sense of the content. In addition, the principles highlight that discourses do not exist in isolation and that all discourses are rooted in history.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative data analysis method and has been adopted by social constructionist researchers who contend that meaning is created through social interaction. Although discourse analysis believes in adopting a reflexive manner towards understanding phenomenon, social constructionists also hold that a researcher cannot be objective and has an opinion about a topic. For both social constructionists and discourse analysts a researcher's expectations, beliefs or cultural values will have an impact on the research process (Anderson & Goolishian, 1993; Lyell, 1998).

In social constructionism emphasis is also placed on the use of language to construct reality. For constructionists meaning is created through social interaction and discourse analysis is therefore a way of understanding social interactions by analyzing text. Miller (2000) argues that discourse analysis is based on the study of language, the meanings behind the words, and the values that are implied. Similarly McGregor (2007) states that discourse refers to an expression of oneself using words. By using discourse analysis the researcher examines how people use language to construct versions of their experiences. Miller (2000) reinforces the idea that people draw on cultural and linguistic resources to construct their talk in ways that will elicit a certain effect.

It is further argued that discourses have historical backgrounds and therefore to understand a discourse it is important to understand or be familiar with its history (Miller, 2000; O'Connor, 2006; Parker, 1992). According to McGregor (2007) discourse analysis challenges us to see words as having meaning in a particular historical, social and political condition. He argues that people are often not aware of the fact that their words are politicized as they carry power that reflects the interest of those who speak. For example, in this particular study an understanding of the marriage system amongst Black South Africans would help to understand some of the ways that marriage is defined and interpreted by the participants in the study (see Chapter 2). Miller (2000) argues that there are many ways in which people respond to the dominant discourses about marriage and gender roles. This study presents the responses of a selected sample of Black South African women in dual-career marriages.

The preceding statements show that discourses are historically located and it is therefore important to consider the history of a discourse when analysis that discourse. Powers (2001) reinforces that there is a history behind every discourse and as a result there are historical influences that regulate discourse. It is for this reason that this study explored the history of marriage as defined by religious discourse, cultural discourse and the discourse on dual-career marriages. The descriptions of the various discourses on the same object (marriage) illustrate the different ways in which meaning can be attached based on the changes in context. In addition, it is argued that discourses draw meaning and institutional support from each other, meaning that no single definition of a text exists in isolation and therefore the definition and meaning attached to text are usually informed by the broader social discourses around a text.

Furthermore Parker (1992) argues that people behave in ways that are prescribed by the dominant discourses within institutions. In marriage, for example, a woman would assume the submissive and inferior role because these are discursive practices expected within marriage. These roles are also reinforced by the general social and cultural views regarding how women should conduct themselves in marriage. In assuming and maintaining such behaviour the subjects are continually involved in the process of creating discourse and therefore supporting institutions. As Parker (1992) argues, subjects in any discourse are actively involved in the production of the discourse.

Discourse analysis is closely linked to power and power relations (Parker, 1992; Powers, 2001) and it is therefore argued that in analyzing discourse it is important to

remain aware of the power relations within a discourse. Parker (1992) argues that institutions are structured around power relations while Powers (2001) argues that in conducting a power analysis it is necessary to identify the processes and social practices that people use to construct their subjective understandings of their social life.

Within discourse analysis the aim is to provide interpretative claims based on power relations within a particular historical context. Powers (2001) argues that discourse analysis focuses on power relations that are involved in the history and present functioning of a discourse. In summary, discourse always involves power, it is always connected to the past and the current context and it can be interpreted differently by people because each person has a different background, knowledge and power position (McGregor, 2007). It is for this particular reason that post-structuralists and discourse analysts contend that there is no “right” interpretation of any discourse but rather a more adequate interpretation (Neuman, 2000).

According to Miller (2000) each context has contradictions and internally flawed discourses that present mixed messages. He argues further that it is therefore also common for people to choose to embrace certain aspects of the social discourse while subverting other discourses. Discourse analysis concerns itself with exploring the connotations and implications evoked by a particular text (Parker, 1992) and therefore when conducting discourse analysis it is important to identify the contradictions within a discourse.

Discourse analysis is a way of understanding social interactions, therefore in conducting research and in particular by using interviews as a method of data collection the researcher becomes part of these social interactions. McGregor (2007) states that in post-structuralist methodologies, interviews are treated as a piece of social interaction whereby the researcher's contributions or talk is as interesting as that of the interviewees. The researcher can therefore not be fully objective and needs to acknowledge her own bias and positions in the process of conducting research. This process is referred to as reflexivity and was discussed in the previous section. The aim of this particular research study was to understand the position of women in their marriages and in order to achieve this aim the researcher examined power relationships in dual-career marriages.

3.8 The process of analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and written text was created of each interview. The identity of the participants was removed from the transcripts to maintain their confidentiality and pseudonyms were assigned to participants in order to protect their identity while providing information relating to their backgrounds (in Chapter 4). The recorded interviews were transcribed within 24 hours of being conducted. The intention of this rapid transcription process was to allow the researcher to become familiar with the data as quickly as possible.

Analysis was a continuous process in which the protocols were read over a period of time and each time a deeper level of analysis was reached. As a result the data analysis and the literature review occurred in tandem. While the literature review

guided the researcher in observing certain aspects in relation to the topic under investigation during the analysis phase the process of data analysis also informed the relevant literature that needed to be reviewed.

It should also be noted that although discourse analysis can also focus on body language and other forms of semiosis as a means of discourse (Powers, 2001), this study mainly focused on analyzing the spoken words that were transcribed to create a written text. In addition the participants' social and historical contexts were taken into consideration. During the analysis phase the researcher constantly reflected on the questions asked during the interviews and the responses provided by the participants in order to avoid making irrelevant analyses that would not meet the objectives of the study.

The analysis was completed in three phases and each phase is outlined in the sections below.

3.8.1 Phase 1

At the beginning of the analysis, the researcher read through the collected data to get an overall sense of the data and to get a feel for the different participants' frameworks. While reading the individual protocols the researcher made note of the ways in which the participants constructed the meaning of the concepts that were being investigated. Each of the individual protocols was read several times to ensure that the constructions of the concepts were fully documented by the researcher and to ensure that no new interpretations emerged from each successive

re-reading. The individual protocols were therefore read and re-read until the researcher was convinced that there was no evidence of any new trends or interpretations from the text. During the initial analysis of the different protocols, the researcher also noted similarities in terms of how the participants constructed ideas and attached meaning to their constructions.

3.8.2 Phase 2

The second phase of the analysis involved identifying common constructions or meanings that emerged from the different interviews. The identified constructions were then deconstructed to gain a better understanding of each discourse as constructed by different individuals. During the deconstruction phase the researcher examined the text for contradictions, similarities and ambiguities emerging from the constructions of the participants. Deconstruction is a term that was coined by Jacque Derrida and was later used by Michel Foucault (Kotze' & Kotze', 1997) and is described by Kotze' and Kotze' (1997) as an analysis of gaps, silences, ambiguities and power relations implicit within discourses. Furthermore in this phase the researcher also identified the objectives of the research based on the language used by the participants.

After the discourses were deconstructed the researcher searched for similarities and differences regarding the ways in which the participants spoke about the different discourses. The researcher also drew on the historical background as well as the context within which the participants were operating to gain a better understanding of the discourses. The analysis found that the meanings that the participants attached

to the discourses were the result of their historical background, the current situation, their socio-political context as well as the dominant discourses around marriage.

3.8.3 Phase 3

Following the process of categorizing and searching for differences and similarities in how the participants attached meaning to their situation, the researcher then integrated the different constructions. At this stage the researcher attempted to construct a holistic and comprehensive view of the emerging discourses or constructions.

During the third phase of the analysis three more interviews were conducted to determine whether any additional discourses would emerge. The participants that were interviewed during the third phase were Mapula, Charmaile and Zanele. The interview process was concluded when the researcher felt that the information gained had reached a point of saturation. The literature was also constantly reviewed to make sense of the analysis. The data was analyzed as interviews were conducted and this process also ensured the stability and credibility of the findings (to be discussed in the section that follows). Gibbs (2002) states that qualitative data analysis is interactive and that it typically coincides with data collection.

3.9 Validity and reliability in qualitative research

Qualitative research has been criticised for lacking the rigour and credibility associated with traditional quantitative research (Horsburgh, 2003). With quantitative research the emphasis is on the accuracy of data and the extent to which data can be generalized. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) quantitative research concerns itself with the extent to which results are consistent over time (reliability) and whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure (validity).

Qualitative research disputes the idea of the generalizability of results and argues that meaning is historically situated and therefore no two people can experience the same 'problem' in the same way. With qualitative research there is a multiplicity of information and results can thus not be generalized across different contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In qualitative research reference is made to various techniques that can be used to evaluate and validate qualitative research. For example, Horsburgh (2003) and Popey, Rogers and Williams (1998) highlight hallmarks of qualitative research that can be used to ensure the validity of qualitative research. One of the hallmarks that has been highlighted is the construct of reflexivity which, as described in section 3.5, clearly illustrates the researcher's subjective involvement in the research process. The researcher acknowledges that her framework and context had an influence on the conception of the research. Therefore, by referring to her personal journey with

regards to the topic she provides the context and foundation upon which the research is grounded.

Validity in qualitative research can also be seen in the extent to which the researcher provides sufficient detail to enable the reader to interpret the meaning and context of what is presented (Popey et al., 1998). Validation is thus dependent on the transparency with which the data collection and analysis procedures are presented. Similarly Koch (1994) argues that the trustworthiness of the research process can be determined by the extent to which the research provides information and the process by which the end product has been reached. The discussion of data collection, research methodology and data analysis processes outlined in this Chapter is in keeping with this hallmark of ensuring validity during the research process.

One of the hallmarks described by Horsburgh (2003) and Popey et al. (1998) is interpretation of subjective meaning, which refers to the process of using the participants' accounts to analyse and interpret data. Details around how this hallmark was adhered to are presented in the discussion on research findings (Chapter 4). In addition, Horsburgh and Popey et al. further suggest that good qualitative research should include a description of context, which refers to the need to describe the social context within which the research was conducted in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the context in which the study was conducted. This is accounted for in the section describing data collection (section 3.4).

Triangulation is used by qualitative researchers to ensure a research account that is rich, robust, comprehensive and well developed (Thurmond, 2001). Triangulation involves using multiple data sources in the investigation to produce understanding. While there are various methods of triangulation theoretical validation and data triangulation are particularly valid to this research. Theoretical triangulation refers to using multiple theoretical perspectives to examine and interpret the data (Thurmond, 2001). Thurmond (2001) further argues that the benefit of this type of triangulation is that it provides a broader and deeper understanding of the findings.

The next paragraphs discuss how reliability and validity are ensured within social constructionist and qualitative research.

3.9.1 Ensuring validity in the project

Validity is a construct usually associated with quantitative research methods and measures the extent to which the theories or explanations derived from the research data are true and correctly capture the phenomenon under investigation (Gibbs, 2002; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2007). In qualitative research validity is determined by the extent to which the data obtained from the participants has been consistently checked to a point where the data analysis process becomes self-correcting (Gibbs, 2002; Schurink, 1998) and the researcher is able to "identify when to continue, stop or modify the research process" (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002, p. 17). In this research process, the researcher and the promoter were on the lookout throughout the process for any evidence of the data obtained that became repetitive or irrelevant relative to the research question. This process helped the researcher to

determine when to stop or continue with the data collection, literature review and data analysis.

Qualitative research focuses on understanding the phenomenon under investigation and in doing so the analysis aims at ensuring that the research findings capture what the participants say or what is happening. Validity in this regard is measured by the extent to which the analysis reflects what was said by the participants. This understanding of validity is in keeping with the theoretical framework for this study (social constructionism), which does not aim to seek an ultimate truth but rather focuses on identifying the constructions by the participants concerning the discourse under investigation.

The social constructionist framework argues that there are multiple ways in which meaning can be constructed and it is therefore important to understand the different constructions of the same phenomenon. In the same way the method of analysis used in this investigation, discourse analysis, places emphasis on taking into account the different ways of reasoning and accurately capturing the meaning attached to an issue without needing to establish the correctness of any one perspective (O'Connor, 2006; Trochim, 2006). Both qualitative research and the social constructionist framework are concerned not so much with whether data is true, but with capturing and understanding what is said at a point in time (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This is so because both paradigms contest the notion of objectivity.

In qualitative research stability is also used as an indication of validity (Burns, 2006). Stability in qualitative research refers to the trustworthiness of data and is concerned

with whether the observations are repeatable (Gibbs 2002) during the data collection process. In order to ensure that data is stable it is important to continuously reflect on the objectives of the study, to ensure that the participants are guided to remain within the domain of the study. In addition, during the analysis phase is it important to remain within the scope of the study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that the stability of the findings is concerned with the degree to which the findings respond to the focus of the inquiry and not the biases of the researcher.

During the analysis phase the researcher conducted additional interviews in order to ensure that the meaning constructed in the initial interviews was also present in these additional interviews. As a result of this undertaking the researcher can safely argue that by a certain point (as illustrated previously) no new constructions emerged and this showed that the data was stable. Data was also interpreted from different viewpoints taking into account the ever changing contexts within which the participants operated. The interpretation took into account the different social discourses that the participants made use of in their interviews. These discourses are predominantly the Christian and the cultural discourses. The researcher identified how participants used these two discourses to construct reality about their situation.

Consistency in the answers received from different participants enabled the researcher to compare the extent of stability in the findings. Stability is also measured by the extent of the researcher's level of empathy and the extent to which the researcher reflects on her understanding of issues to the participants (Gibbs, 2002). The social constructionist paradigm maintains that the researcher is a key

instrument in the construction of meaning. By reflecting on her understanding of what the participants said the researcher was able to confirm or negate the meanings derived from the conversation.

In qualitative research the context in which behaviour is understood and interpreted is crucial. The context includes the researcher's viewpoints on the subject matter and how the research procedure itself affected and was impacted on by the researcher. This information is included in the thesis because it forms part of the meaning of the study's observations and interpretations. The next part outlines reliability in qualitative research and specifically in relation to this research study.

3.9.2 Reliability in qualitative research

In quantitative research reliability measures the extent to which the research findings will remain consistent across repeated investigations in different circumstances with different investigators and the extent to which such findings are generalizeable (Gibbs, 2002). This study adopted a qualitative methodology with social constructionism as a theoretical framework. These approaches both argue that there are multiple realities and that people construct discourses differently at different times. As a result it is not possible for data to remain consistent across repeated investigations with different participants.

For social constructionists meaning is evolutionary and historically located (McLeod, 2002). Furthermore, constructionist discourse and qualitative research are not interested in making generalized statements about human behaviour. These

approaches focus on understanding the meaning attached to a particular discourse at a certain point in time (Schurink, 1998). Qualitative research therefore refers to dependability rather than reliability. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the process of allowing for external audits is aimed at fostering the dependability of the data presented during the research process. Allowing an external person to evaluate the accuracy and to evaluate whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data allows researchers to ascertain the extent to which the presented data is dependable.

To ensure that the data was dependable the analysis of the interview texts was discussed with the former supervisor of this study (Professor Johan Schoeman), who made his own interpretation of information gathered and questioned some of the analysis made. The analysis was also not only dependent on the researcher's interpretation, but also considered how other sources concerning the same topic or themes would account for similar findings. According to Thurmond (2001), if every person who is involved in the same data analysis come to the same outcome then it is more likely that the findings are true and therefore dependable. This data was presented to the research promoter for his input and own analysis, and he came to similar analysis.

3.10 Summary and conclusion

This Chapter outlined how the research was conducted, illustrating the process used to select the participants, the method used to collect data as well as the approach that was used in analyzing the texts. The aim of this study was to understand the

participants' construction of their reality, thereby illustrating one way in which the concepts under investigation are constructed by a group of women in the same context. The next Chapter details the analysis process and describes the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter discussed the methodology used in this study. It described the use of interviews in the collection of data and discussed how the data was gathered and transcribed into written text. The transcribed data were then analyzed using the method of discourse analysis. In order to understand the meaning participants construct about the topic, the researcher re-read the protocols and listened to the recorded interviews on several occasions in an attempt to gain a holistic understanding of the data.

Each transcribed interview was first analyzed individually to arrive at an understanding of each participant. Common discourses were then identified, focusing specifically on the ways in which the participants constructed the discourses under investigation. This Chapter presents the discourses that were dominant in the interviews, while the next Chapter focuses on discussing the findings in detail. The discourses discussed in this Chapter are the discourse of culture, the discourse of Christianity, the discourse of power, the discourse of independence and freedom, the discourse of fear and helplessness and the discourse of satisfaction. The presentation of the findings is preceded by a description of study participants.

4.2 Description of participants

A total of 11 interviews were conducted for this study. However, only 10 of the interviews were used during the analysis as one of the tapes was lost and therefore its contents could not be transcribed or analysed. The participants in this study are young professional women ranging in age from 27 to 35. At the time when the study was conducted the participants had been married for at least one year and for not more than five years. A brief summary of each participant is provided below. As indicated earlier the participants' names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Ria

Ria is 34 years old and has been married for three and a half years. She is an advocate and currently holds a senior managerial position within her company. She worked for some years before she got married and has held various professional positions which expanded her independence and status. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in law.

Mokgadi

Mokgadi is 32 years old and has been married for three years. She is a biologist and had been in her role as specialist scientist for a few years prior to her marriage. She is currently studying towards her Master's degree in the field.

Esther

Esther is a Human Resources Consultant and she has been in specialist roles for most of her career. She currently holds a managerial position in Human Resources. She is 33 years old and has been married for two years. She has been in a relationship with her husband since university but only married him a few years after she started working.

Getrude

Getrude is currently an industrial relations advisor. She is an advocate and practiced as an attorney prior to her marriage. She is 35 years old and has been married for three years.

Toa

Toa is a 30 year old business development manager and has held specialist positions throughout her career. She has been married for two and a half years and was a professional prior to her marriage.

Mapule

Mapule is a strategist within her company, a role she has held for two years. She has a doctoral degree and has been married for two years. She is 34 years old.

Tebogo

Tebogo is the director of a business unit with her current employer. She is 34 years old and has been married for three and half years. She has been in a relationship

with her husband for about five years, but they were only married after she had held various managerial positions.

Charmaile

Charmaile is a manager in Human Resources. She is 33 years old and has been married for two and half years. She is currently studying to maximize her academic qualifications.

Zanele

Zanele is a Communication manager within a corporate company. She is 34 years old and has been married for two years. Zanele was in a relationship with her husband for three years prior to their marriage.

Refiloe

Refiloe is 33 years old and works as a Human Resources Specialist. She has been married for three years, although she knew her husband for five years prior to them getting married.

4.3 Presentation of findings

The presentation of the findings is guided by the interpretation of the transcripts, using the method of discourse analysis, in line with the objectives of the study. While conducting discourse analysis the following discourses emerged from the text:

1. The discourse of “culture”
2. The discourse of Christianity
3. The discourse of power
4. The discourse of autonomy, independence and freedom
5. The discourse of fear and helplessness
6. The discourse of satisfaction

The discourses are presented in relation to the broader context of this study, which is the social context of marriage. Direct quotations from the transcripts are provided as evidence for the identification of a discourse. Some quotations appear in more than one discourse as they were found relevant for use in different discourses. The presentation of the identified discourses is preceded by a section focusing on the participants’ construction of marriage.

4.3.1 The participants’ construction of marriage

The participants’ construction of marriage stems from their subjective experiences in marriage and is informed by the ways in which dominant social discourses such as Christianity and culture construct the position of a married woman. Through the lens of the cultural discourse the participants construct marriage as the unification of a man and a woman resulting from the practice of *lobola.* The payment of *lobola,* as argued in the literature Chapter, gives the husband power over his wife (Chambers, 2000; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Kambarami, 2006). Culture is constructed by the participants as a powerful means of determining a woman’s behaviour in marriage. Through their experiences and through the manner in which they articulate their

experiences the participants give culture power. The discussion of culture in the literature review found that one of the criticisms of the concept of culture relates to the way in which culture functions as a mechanism of power. The construction of culture as powerful is illustrated in the following extract:

> "With us as black women it [marriage] starts with *lobola*… It [culture] is always coming in to shape up what your marriage is and it will continue to be there because people are from backgrounds and knowing with us as black women it starts with *lobola.* The moment your husband pays *lobola*, it says he's got the whole dominion over you" (Ria).

The participants also construct marriage as a partnership and in so doing they construct themselves in marriage as partners. The word partner is a construct used to communicate a relationship between people that reflects some sort of equality or equity in that relationship. The participants' construction of wives as partners contradicts the dominant discourses around how women's behaviour in marriage is socially constructed (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.3.2). Similarly in the same section of the literature review, it is indicated that the RCMA of 1998 accords wives equal legal status to their husbands and therefore recognizes woman in marriage as independent (Mamashele, 2004):

> "When you agree especially in marriage as partners" (Esther).

> "We are partners in the running of the household" (Getrude).

"In a marriage, I would say it depends on the conduct of your partner" (Ria).

Even at this early point of the discussion it is clear that there is a contradiction in terms of how the participants construct themselves in marriage and how they construct marriage in general. From the cultural perspective (to be discussed below) a married woman is expected to be submissive and dependent on her husband, whereas the participants see themselves as partners in marriage. A partner denotes someone of equal status and the women thus elevate themselves to a status of equality with their husbands. It could be argued that in this way the participants subtly oppose the cultural construction of a woman as someone who is inferior and their subtle opposition could be informed by how the RCMA construct the position of women in marriages. This contradiction raises questions in relation to who defines the customary marriage and the extent to which the expectations of marriage relationships stipulated in the various marriage acts are practiced by society. In a society that is attempting to promote democracy it could be argued that the constructions of various acts could be aimed as a diverse population, including women, who will then use these forums to 'defend' or 'articulate' their preferred status in marriages and in society at large. The next paragraphs present the discourses that emerged in the study.

4.3.2 The discourse of culture

Culture is a dominant discourse that the participants used to construct meaning about marriage. Culture was described by the participants as placing people into hierarchies with women positioned as inferior to men. This differential power hierarchy was discussed in section 4.3.1. The participants acknowledge certain cultural expectations and conform to these cultural expectations by behaving according to expectations. Through subscribing to these expectations the participants adhere to the social construction of a married woman as someone who is under the authority of a husband and as someone who should be submissive to the headship of the husband. Some quotations that illustrate this are:

> "I ascribe to traditional or cultural principles, meaning that I don't take the Constitution home. I understand that my husband is the head of the family meaning that we are partners in the running of the household and the business of the house, but then most of the time he has the ultimate say" (Getrude).

> "I think I did that to respect the cultural context of the marriage. In our culture I know what a woman's role is whether I have taken that consciously or subconsciously there is a certain way I believe a woman should be in marriage, I am expected to be under the headship of my husband and I am conscious of that" (Toa).

> "In terms of culture men are standing up to ensure that the household is run by them… the man is the head and the wife is the neck and if the neck is not there, the head will not be able to turn sideways" (Ria).

> "You are told what you can do in marriage and what you cannot do" (Tebogo)

It is clear from the transcripts that the participants' construction of their behaviour is a conscious effort that results from their understanding of cultural roles and hierarchies. This could be a result of their awareness around how traditional customs enforce the position of wives in marriages as subordinate and inferior (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Hoza, 2010). Simultaneously the participants also construct themselves as equals in marriage, as reflected in the preceding discussions. For example, Ria insinuates that her husband is dependent on her or that she at the very least co-contributes to the running of their household.

The participants also describe culture as oppressing women and cultural expectations of how a married woman should behave as forcing them to compromise their views due to fear of being victimized. Nonetheless, the participants choose to embrace their constructed cultural identity. Some quotations that illustrate this are:

> "Culture has been and still is very oppressive… I still see culture oppressing us as professional women" (Ria).

> "There are things I don't do which will shock you because people have preconceived ideas about professional women. For instance, I don't argue with my mother-in-law, I don't answer back, that's how I was taught at home. I'd know that this woman is wrong now she is really pushing it, but I'd smile and she would not even hear it from me, if it is really burning me and I have to complain, eh, being the lawyer that I am, I'd find the way of linking somebody else whom I'd have to ask what is happening or whom I'd have to then carry or make use as a vessel to carry the message through and hope to God that the message gets through to her that I did not appreciate that. Seriously I really don't answer back, she'd be wrong I'll just smile" (Getrude).

> "In my situation I have also found that I got to compromise because of fear of being criticized. In our culture in black families we are taught that it is family first and the rest later, that rest basically meaning you come secondary to the needs of the family" (Mapule).

> "The challenge there is to bite my tongue and not even say" (Toa).

By constructing the position of a wife in marriage as inferior and submissive the participants see culture as belittling of women in marriages. According to Mapule women in marriages are basically treated like children, as illustrated in the following quotation:

> "I find that in marriage you are limited, you have these African husbands who are the head of the family and you are treated like a baby where you need to listen to what he says and support him continuously" (Mapule).

Although the participants prefer to construct themselves as partners and equals in marriage and want to be acknowledged as equally significant in the running of the household, they continue to construct their identity and behaviour in terms of cultural expectations. In doing so the participants maintain the cultural construction of a married woman and maintain the gender role constructions of what is expected of a married woman. Some of the quotations that illustrate this are:

> "I observed how my mother conducted her business in her house…I knew that my father was the head of the family and whether you knew the law or not, his word was the word, and my mother said very little about how their household business is run. For instance I knew that if there was something I wanted to do, like going out, I would go and ask my mom but at the end she'll say my father would have to approve… That practice I was able to proudly take into my marriage life" (Getrude).

> "The thing that a man wants from his life partner is somebody to pamper him, somebody to look after his family. In the context of the marriage it boils down to what your husband wants. It is clear that you need to adapt your behaviour to suit your marriage context" (Toa).

The participants also choose to compromise their need for a different construction of marriage in favour of the need to complete their life cycle and life roles (in this instance the life role of being married). They connect marriage to biological and social inevitabilities, as something that is 'natural'. Some of the quotations that illustrate this are:

> "Being a professional woman does not mean I don't want a home, I don't want a family and I derive a great deal of satisfaction from being a good wife" (Toa).

> "At the same time marriage I think is a natural thing that is triggered by biology or socially when you are of a certain age and you are dating it is expected that you will marry…you understand that marriage is about compromising" (Tebogo).

However, the participants reflected on contradictions between their constructions of their roles in the family and what actually transpires in the running of the household. Getrude, for example, describes herself as a partner in marriage, but she says that the husband has the final say. This is an indirect acknowledgement that no partnership exists because in a relationship of partners, conclusions are agreed upon through negotiations. By accepting the husband as having the final say, the participant accepts the cultural construction of man as dominant. Ria also describes herself as a neck, a figurative expression which indicates the "equal" position that she holds in the marriage while still maintaining that her husband makes the final decision.

Although the participants seem 'unhappy' with how culture constructs their identity they are also responsible for conserving their 'cultural identity'. This is observed by how they continue constructing their identity and behaviour in marriage in accordance with the cultural constructions of appropriate identities and behaviours for married woman. There is an internal contradiction between the need to construct themselves differently from how culture constructs them, and the need to remain rooted in cultural norms and expectations. These two varying constructions of the self can be linked to the discussions in Chapter 2 concerning the social construction of an identity. The cultural identity of a submissive, less powerful role talks to the "me" attribute of the self, in other words the social self. The participants' construction of themselves as powerful and autonomous could be linked to the "I" attribute of the self, which allows them to construct themselves as independent and autonomous.

The participants also attribute their acceptance of and ability to cope with cultural expectations to observations they have made rom their interactions with other women in their lives. This indicates the role that enculturation and identification play on how people construct themselves. The socially constructed behaviour expectation of married woman is carried from one generation to the next. Some quotations that illustrate this are:

> "I think I am also fortunate like I said in my case I had the experience of having professional women around me, my mother, and my aunts. So I had the opportunity to see them in two different contexts. I will see how they were at the office, my mother was a go getter, very assertive at work, and I will see how she behaved at home. And this made me realize that

> oh this is how it is, when she gets home she gets water for my father to wash his hands, she is serving him on a tray, she is doing things that my father could do for himself. My father would sit comfortably in his chair and ask my mother to get him something from the kitchen like getting him a glass of juice or water. So I think it is fortunate that I saw that because rightly or wrongly my mother and my aunts developed a coping mechanism or a way of dealing with these dual roles" (Toa).

> "At home I am a completely different person, I am also influenced by tradition, by culture and perhaps I am also a product of the environment within which I was raised. I observed how my mother conducted her business in her house even though she sent me to law school. I knew that my father was the head of the family and whether you knew the law or not, his word was 'the' word, and my mother said very little about how their household business is run…that practice I was able to proudly take into my marriage life … I subscribe to the traditional cultural role philosophy of a woman because that is how I have been taught, and I don't have a problem with getting out of my professional self when I am at home to fulfil that role" (Getrude).

During the interviews it was also apparent that the participants find that their voices are silenced in marriage due to cultural expectations. Therefore the dominant voice becomes that of the husband. Women are not allowed to express their dissatisfaction around what happens in their marriages because such expressions would be interpreted as defying culture or being rebellious. Some of the quotations

that were presented in section 4.4.2 show that women are not expected to challenge their husbands or express their dissatisfaction in marriage. More evidence is reflected in the following extracts:

> “In my situation I have also found that I got to compromise because of fear of being criticized. In our culture in black families we are taught that it is family first and the rest later, that rest basically meaning you come secondary to the needs of the family” (Mapule).

> “The challenge there is to bite my tongue and not even say" (Toa).

> “But if it means keeping the peace at home and remain silent I find that I get to compromise and I am happy to compromise, I don’t mind at all” (Getrude).

The discussion above indicates that the participants have identified with other women in similar contexts and constructed their behaviour in accordance with this identification. Some of the participants stated that they had observed their fathers as ‘heads’ of their households and saw how their mothers behaved in a subordinate manner. They expressed a clear understanding of the cultural expectations and the importance of adhering to these expectations.

In the interviews it was also expressed that the participants behave in ways that are prescribed by the dominant discourses in their lives due to fear of being rejected. Cultural practices and expectations are described as constructing and directing the

participants' behaviour. The participants behave in accordance with expectations due to the fear of being isolated, criticized or victimized. It is also clear that although the participants could chose to reject this imposition they would also then have to deal with the consequences of being rejected.

In general, the participants see culture as a dominant attribute that informs how they construct their identities in marriage. This is evident in the preceding discussion where the participants indicated that culture imposes role and behaviour expectations on them and they conform to these expectations. While some participants expressed contempt for these impositions, some of the participants have found ways of being content with these impositions and have embraced the expectations. The construction of culture as something that has power has been criticized (Brumann, 1999). Furthermore it appears that the construct of culture is used as part of everyday conversation by the participants, and this use of culture has also been criticized because when the term is used in everyday situations it becomes wide, vague and simplified (Brumann, 1999).

4.3.3 The discourse of Christianity

Another dominant discourse presented by the participants as informing the construction of their identity in marriage is the discourse of Christianity. In a similar manner to cultural expectations Christianity is presented as constructing the position of a married woman as someone who should behave in a subordinate manner. The Christian discourse places the husband in a superior position and the wife is expected to respect and honour her husband.

The expectation set by the Christianity discourse influences how the participants behave in marriage and how they construct autonomy in marriage. This is illustrated in the following quotations:

> "Christianity also says that women have to submit themselves to their husbands. It is stated in the Bible that our freedom lies with our husbands. I associate autonomy with submission, because as a true believer I have to be submissive to my husband because if I am not submissive then I will not be happy in my marriage" (Mokgadi).

The extract above suggests that the Christian discipline gives women no choice in terms of choosing appropriate behaviour. According to this statement women in marriage are expected to be submissive and 'have' to construct themselves in a submissive manner. The extract also implies that unless a woman becomes submissive she will not be happy. This suggests that in marriage the participant compromises her need to be autonomous for the sake of her happiness.

The Christian discourse further constructs the role of a woman as that of someone who is expected to maintain peace in families, as illustrated in the following quotations:

> "When you look at our spiritual background as Christians, you need to make sure that there is peace, you need to reach out to the other person, you need to give the other person at least the right to do things her own way and ensure that the other person is satisfied" (Ria).

> "Yes, the word of God teaches us to move away from our human nature and do things in a Christian way. Human nature and Christian ways are very different. I have realized that if I choose to prescribe to the Christian ways, I tend to be happier and at ease with things that happen than if I have to fight and respond in a human manner. Autonomy is opposite to what the Bible teaches us and as a Christian I draw my strong and my principles mostly from my Christian teachings hence I am able to be calm on issues such as autonomy. The Bible teaches us to submit ourselves to our husband but not hundred percent because God has also given us freedom as women" (Mokgadi).

The Christian discourse constructs the position of a woman as submissive and places men in a powerful position by equating the husband to Jesus. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> "The Bible says you need to respect your husband and your husband is like Jesus" (Esther).

Christianity has clear behaviour expectations for women and one of these expectations is that wives should respect their husbands as their husbands are seen as senior and more powerful in marriage. While the participants acknowledge that Christianity constructs them as submissive they also express that there are times when they are not submissive. At times the participants contest issues they are in disagreement with, although some of the participants also compromise for the sake of maintaining the peace at home. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> "I know you have to be submissive in a religious way, but I don't think you always have to be submissive even if your husband is doing wrong" (Esther).

In compromising on expressing their views in marriage the participants rely on a higher power, God, to fight their battles. The interview texts illustrate that it is not uncommon for professional married women to not resist their situation. The participants draw on a religious discourse, i.e. 'Christian principles' to cope and deal with their challenges. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> "Some women end up fighting the situation which I also did, I fought the situation as a Black person but also as a spiritual person I ended up looking at the spiritual side of things to say in my family I would like to see peace and what would God maybe require of me." (Ria).

As with the cultural discourse the Christian discourse constructs the position of the wife as submissive and under the authority of her husband. It is clear from the texts that while the participants tend to accept their constructed identity they are not fully satisfied with how the dominant social discourses construct the position of women.

4.3.4 The discourse of power

The preceding discussions illustrated how the discourses of Christianity and culture construct the position of a man as superior and a husband as someone who has

authority over his wife. Although the participants have embraced this construction they also construct themselves as having a degree of power. There is constant reference in the texts to the ways in which the participants see themselves as empowered. In the discussion on culture it was clearly shown that the participants constructed themselves as equally powerful as their husbands. This was illustrated through statements such as “I am the neck”, and “we are partners”. However, the next quotations illustrate that although the women are empowered or made powerful by their professional status and their financial abilities this empowerment does not apply to the marriage.

> “Women are empowered and more so professional women are empowered so” (Toa).

> “When I am at work I become the lawyer, I know that there might be people whom I have to exercise my authority over because of my work… At home I am a completely different person” (Getrude).

As a result of their professional status and the resultant empowerment the participants stated that there is a struggle at home in terms of power sharing. The struggle for power is a result of the participants’ need to share in the power at home in accordance with their empowered position in the workplace. However, the participants still construct the possibility of sharing of power in the household as a decision that needs to be taken by their husbands. This suggests that the participants construct a view that the interests of men or husbands are prioritised. This view is in accordance with cultural expectations. The participants also indicate

that they understand the construction of a woman as subordinate and instead of struggling for power they revert to cultural construction regarding appropriate behaviour for women. Some of the quotations that illustrate the above are:

> "There is a serious struggle for power, but for me it is not a struggle as such because I indicated that I subscribe to the traditional cultural role philosophy of a woman because that is how I have been taught, and I don't have a problem with getting out of my professional self when I am at home to fulfil that role" (Getrude).

> "If your husband gives you an opportunity to decide on certain things (or gives you some power), then he shift/shares power. If, however, that man sees himself as the sole person in power then it means that power will always lie in him and you will not have anything to contribute or say as a wife. So really power relations are related to how we define autonomy. If your husband stamps his foot and tells you that culturally as a man he must decide on things, he is then using the power granted by culture. If he approaches you and shares the power then he is acknowledging that you can also decide on issues rather than him imposing his cultural background on you" (Ria).

The participants who construct themselves as sharing power in marriage also experience guilt around this power sharing as a result of the awareness that they are not fulfilling cultural expectations. In the extract below the participant becomes apologetic about her behaviour and states that although her behaviour can be easily

interpreted as her having power over her husband this is actually not the case. In constructing her position as a perception, the participant protects herself from being judged for behaving differently from the norm. She states that:

> “You know sometimes it becomes difficult because I tend to speak my mind and somewhere I feel I overpower him… For example, if you come into our house you will think I have power than my husband because I am more talkative and somehow I jump into taking decisions" (Esther).

Although the participants enjoy the privilege of sharing power with their husbands they also indicate that their husbands have the final decision making power in terms of this power sharing arrangement. It is evident from the interviews that the participants continue to construct the position of the husband as powerful and in control while they construct themselves as being less powerful. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> “Men are powerful and have control, they should tell where the family is going, what needs to be brought or bought into the family and this also depends on how marriage is setup. If your husband gives you an opportunity to decide on certain things (or gives you some power), then he shifts/shares power. If, however that man sees himself as the sole person in power then it means that power will always lie in him and you will not have anything to contribute or say as a wife” (Ria).

4.3.5 Autonomy, independence and freedom discourses

During the interviews the participants constantly used the words 'independence' and 'freedom' when they discussed autonomy. Autonomy, independence and freedom were constructed both from an individualistic framework and from a collectivistic framework. As individuals the participants constructed themselves as independent and as having the freedom to behave as they wish. Some of the quotations that illustrate this are indicated below:

> "Autonomy for me is freedom, being myself and being able to behave in a way that will be satisfying to me" (Esther).

> "Autonomy for me is the freedom to do what I want to do. I think as women we need freedom to do whatever we want to do…autonomy for me is being able to be autonomous in all areas of your being" (Mapule).

> "Autonomy for me is the ability to make decisions on your own without worrying the other will feel not consulted" (Tebogo).

> "Autonomy for me is freedom, being myself and being able to behave in a way that will be satisfying to me" (Mokgadi).

The participants also link autonomy to their 'rights' and particularly to their birth rights and the South African Bill of rights. Some quotations that illustrate this are:

> "Autonomy for me is the right to choose, the right to be what I want to be in a marriage, the right to do things I want to do in a marriage… Not to say that I shouldn't be questioned but really the right to be free in any manner that I'd like to conduct myself as a person and be satisfied" (Ria).

> "Autonomy to me is a right; it is a birth right to both men and women. Well when it comes to marriage, especially in South Africa, since we are having the democracy here, I think it is going to work well if both parties understand that they have freedom towards whatever they are doing in marriage…things have changed and as I indicated to you that autonomy means a right, I think I have some rights in a marriage that I can just work on without my husband saying anything and as a professional woman I think it will be easy for me" (Esther).

The participants also define autonomy as one's ability to depend on oneself and to make independent decisions. The participants indicate that as individuals and as professionals they are independent and as a result they are able to confidently carry out tasks or achieve their wants, goals and desires by themselves. This is illustrated in the following quotations:

> "I believe as far as autonomy is concerned … I am as autonomous as one can define the word autonomy … I believe autonomy is the self" (Getrude).

> "A woman can be independent not always making sure that she consults her husband in making some decisions" (Esther).

The use of the word 'can' emphasizes woman's ability to be independent. It is possible that Esther perceives that women are not treated as people who act or behave independently of men. In the extract from Getrude's interview there is a strong emphasis on her being autonomous and this also indicates her assertion of herself as being independent. The construction of the self as autonomous could be linked to the "I" or personal attribute of identity. In accordance with SIT it also illustrates that the participants have constructed their sense of self as autonomous based on what is expected of them in their professional category or classification.

Furthermore Getrude contextualizes her independence within her status as a professional and states:

> "Professionally being autonomous means being able to dependent on yourself hence the word being independent, and when I say being able to depend on yourself I mean you look at what your role entails as far as the profession is concerned. For example as a lawyer, working in the ER (Employee Relations) department, I know that all the business of the ER depends on me. That does not mean that I don't rely on other people, it's important for me to rely on others so that I can fulfil my role. I delegate a lot where is possible but I understand that even with delegation I am the person who is ultimately responsible for everything that occurs" (Getrude).

The construct of independence as linked to autonomy is also associated with the financial independence that is brought about by the participants' professional status and the fact that they are earning their own income. In the texts the participants

explain how they use their financial independence to act autonomously. Some quotations that illustrate this are:

> "It doesn't matter whether he earns more or I earn more, what is left after the running of the household projects is mine, in that way I feel free… If you want to buy couches and they cost R20 000, and you have it as a woman, don't ever look at the other person, do it yourself. I personally do everything in the house he only pays the bond because I love beautiful things. For me not to create the fights I pay for whatever I like for the house" (Esther).

> "There are things maybe without thinking I'd do because I feel they are necessities. Like buying a dishwasher, I'd buy it whether he agrees or not, not necessarily for me, I believe for all of us, just for the sanity in the house…When I feel tired and if I have the money I just go and buy food I don't consult with anyone. My take is that come 20H00 there has to be food on the table, whether it is homemade food or take-away, but I also strike a balance. I know that takeaways are not necessarily healthy for them and even for me, so you find that I don't do it all the time, but when I am seriously tired and I can afford, I simply go to the restaurant and I buy" (Getrude).

It is also interesting to note that the financial independence referred to in the above extracts relates to traditionally female roles. For example, women are associated with a nurturing responsibility and buying food, so ensuring that there is food on the table and being accountable for clean laundry in the home is aligned to such a role.

While some of the participants are able to act independently others indicate that despite their financial independence their autonomy is still limited and they express dissatisfaction around these limitations. Some participants state that despite their financial independence they are still expected to consult with their husband regarding how to use their own money. Some of the quotations that illustrate this are:

> "For me my autonomy is limited when it comes to financial autonomy in a sense that I cannot just decide to buy myself anything with the money I earn, I need to consult with my husband on how to use it" (Mokgadi).

> "There are certain instances where I would decide to buy something for example a bicycle for my child because I can afford it I would feel it is not necessary to discuss it with my husband. However at times such decisions are sensitive regardless" (Tebogo).

Although the participants acknowledge autonomy as freedom and thus construct themselves as independent, they also acknowledge that in the context of marriage individual freedom is not completely possible. As a result of their awareness of cultural behavioural expectations the women are conscious of how they present themselves in marriage. The participants distinguish between the different contexts within which they operate and state that each context calls for a different way of behaving (behaviour expectations in accordance with multiple social identities) and therefore impact on their sense of autonomy. Some of the quotations that illustrate this are:

"For me as a Black woman there is a difference in roles or paradigm shift between my role and responsibilities at work and my role and responsibilities at home. And I also mentally prepare myself as I am going home that leave the very assertive Toa the manager at work because now it is Toa the wife and the dynamics are very different. So there is always a complex between my autonomy as an individual and being a wife as well as being a working professional" (Toa).

"I believe as far as autonomy is concerned, before I got married as a person, I am as autonomous as one can define the word autonomy, but marriage for me is a totally different institution in the sense that I ascribe to traditional or cultural principles, meaning that I don't take the constitution home. I understand that my husband is the head of the family meaning that we are partners in the running of the household and the business of the house, but then most of the time he has the ultimate say" (Getrude).

"It is not possible for a professional woman to be autonomous given the cultural background that we all as couples come from in our marriages" (Ria).

The transcripts clearly illustrate that in marriage individual autonomy and independence are dominated by collectiveness and consultation on issues. Some of the quotations that illustrate this are:

"I have learned as a result that in marriage you need to discuss issues and jointly decide what action needs to be taken and how such action would be taken and by whom" (Tebogo).

"Autonomy for me is the ability to make decisions on your own without worrying the other will feel not consulted. Based on what I am saying there is therefore no autonomy in marriage because if you just listened to me now (she laughs) most and almost all decisions at home are jointly made however small or big they may seem" (Tebogo).

"I would not do anything without his consent because it would be read differently" (Toa).

4.3.6 Fear and helplessness discourses

During the interviews the participants stated that they are not in a position to openly contest the constructions of the dominant social discourses such as culture and Christianity due to fear of being victimized or isolated. As a result of their need to feel that they belong the participants choose not to challenge the dominant social discourses that construct them as submissive, dependent and less powerful. Although they are empowered by their professional status and financial independence they are also disempowered by the dominant social discourses and this result in feelings of helplessness. Some of the quotations that illustrate this are:

> "It is more forgetting yourself and compromising yourself for the others. In my situation I have also found that I got to compromise because of fear of being criticized" (Mapule).

> "At the same time once you deny or don't follow, you are being rebellious; you are treated as disrespectful to an extent of being victimized. Due to fear of being rejected a lot of educated women still do this, they would follow and not question some of the things imposed on them … you don't want to be a victim of cultural imperialism" (Tebogo).

> "The challenge there is to bite my tongue and not even say" (Toa).

Once again it appears that the dominant social discourses impose certain behavioural expectations on women. Women are also silenced by culture to the extent that they are not able to argue against or defy what is expected of them by dominant social principles.

4.3.7 The discourse of satisfaction

The participants view satisfaction as necessary for an individual's overall sense of happiness or well-being. The therefore believe that marital satisfaction contributes to an individual's overall sense of well-being. The participants state that they draw their satisfaction from their personal achievements and they acknowledge that these achievements are not necessarily celebrated in their home environment. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> "I believe as a person you have to be happy in all areas of your life, being it at home, at work as an individual you need that complete happiness and satisfaction. In the marriage I find that that satisfaction is not always there because you have to always compromise yourself" (Mapule).

In order to feel fulfilled one participant states that she also draws satisfaction from being a good wife. She thus behaves differently at home from how she behaves at work. By being able to adapt her behaviour to the two different contexts in her life she achieves overall happiness. This is in keeping with positioning theory (see Chapter 2, section 2.5) as this participant is able to adapt to her positions and thus experience a healthy functioning of the self. In her statement she also suggested that expecting to be treated as a professional in her marriage context would be unreasonable. The participants states that:

> "Being a professional woman does not mean I don't want a home, I don't want a family and I derive a great deal of satisfaction from being a good wife. When I look at it on balance I am quite happy to play that dual role or to adapt from one environment to the other because if we want to be professionals at home we are just pushing it" (Toa).

Overall the participants agree that it is not possible for them to be completely satisfied in their marriages. The general feeling is that although one can be satisfied with certain aspects of the marriage there will be aspects of the marriage that are unsatisfactory. As reflected in the previous paragraphs the participants indicated that they usually tend to compromise for the sake of peace and happiness at home.

Some of the quotations that illustrate the participants' acknowledgement that they cannot be fully satisfied (in marriage) are:

> "Yes it doesn't but yet again we can never be fully satisfied. I am content in that I told myself that I get recognition as a professional from work and if I can gain that respect and recognition of the people I work with then I am satisfied with that. It really will be icing and a cherry on the cake to get that from my husband, to get it at home" (Toa).

> "On certain things you will agree and on others not, on certain things you'll have satisfaction and on others not" (Ria).

> "I will be lying if I say I am comfortable. I have embraced them but I would not say it is totally comfortable, it is not. For me there is the ideal and there is also reality (Getrude).

One participant stated that she uses Christianity as a source of inspiration in order to find satisfaction in her marriage. The Christian discourse is evoked by the participant to enable her to react positively to the challenges faced in her marriage. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> "At the moment I am happy with how I am conducting my marriage. Saying I'm quite happy I would say the spiritual background has really lessoned so many things for me. If it was not for the spiritual background, I would be saying something else, and if it was not only because of my husband also

being a staunch Christian, I will be saying something else. I have also found that interacting with other couples and getting to know how they behave around issues also helped to change our stance on some issues, when other men allow their wives he also allows his wife" (Ria).

Although the participants feel that they are not fully satisfied with the status quo in their marriages, they also feel that it is important for them to feel respected in marriage as this would result in some level of satisfaction. Although complete respect is not always possible it is the feeling of being respected that would bring about a sense of satisfaction for some participants.

"I think really mainly it has to do with character, acknowledging and respecting each others' character, opinions and views despite whether you agree or not, but respect them. That brings marital satisfaction for us to say there is marital satisfaction it's not easy because there can be marital satisfaction on certain things and on others they may not be" (Ria).

4.4 Conclusion

This Chapter outlined the discourses constructed by the participants about marriage, autonomy and satisfaction. The findings presented were guided by the research questions and what transpired during the interviews. Six discourses were identified, with the cultural and Christian discourses being dominant. In the next Chapter the discourses are interrogated, interpreted and discussed. In addition, the identified discourses are linked to the literature reviewed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous Chapter the findings of the study were presented as six distinct discourses that emerged in the interviews. This Chapter integrates the findings with relevant literature and theory concerning the discourses that emerged in order to provide a broader understanding of the various discourses.

In line with the theoretical approach this research aimed at understanding how the participants operating in a particular social context use language to construct their lives. The research focused on how Black South African women in dual-career marriages construct their marriages and how their constructions of marriage also construct meaning with regards to autonomy and marital satisfaction.

Reflexivity is also discussed towards the end of the Chapter. This section highlights the ways in which the researcher's background co-constructed meaning in this research. The Chapter concludes by presenting the limitations of the study as well as making suggestions for future research based on both the limitations of this particular study as well as the findings of the study.

5.2 The participants' constructions of marriage

In the literature Chapter it was indicated that marriage is difficult to define as it is constructed in multiple ways by different social groups (Crapo, 1996). In this study the participants defined marriage as the unification of a man and a woman either through cultural practices or in Christian rites. The participants therefore adopted a monogamous view of marriage (Rall, 1984).

The two dominant discourses that informed the participants' talk about marriage were those of culture and Christianity. This section discusses how these two discourses contribute to the participants' construction of marriage. Although the two dominant discourses could be discussed as separate sections the concepts and frameworks contained in these discourses are interrelated and it is therefore appropriate to discuss both discourses in one section. In this way the discussion flow also demonstrates the similar ways in which the participants constructed the cultural and the Christian discourses.

With regards to cultural rites, the participants referred to the customary discourse of marriage which recognizes *lobola* as a formal unification of two individuals in marriage. It is clear from the previous Chapter that the participants accept and embrace the customary or cultural marriage. It is also clear that although they have embraced customary marriage in the form of *lobola*, they also talk about *lobola* as a practice that is oppressive towards women and as a practice that does not take into account the changes in the role of women in marriage. For example, customary marriage gives men or husbands authority over their wives. This is despite the fact

that research shows that in many modern marriages women assume many of the responsibilities previously assigned to men (Shope, 2006), a finding that was confirmed by the participants in the current study. A study conducted by Haddock and Zimmerman (2001) found that cultural ideologies are slow to respond to changes in social dynamics such as the changes that have been brought about by dual-earner and dual-career marriages.

The dominant cultural discourse that the participants refer to is based on the traditional construction of marriage as a system in which the man is in control of the household. For example, traditional culture constructs the role of the husband as a provider (materially) while the wife fulfils the role of nurturer. In constructing the wife as a nurturer culture expects a married woman to attend to the emotional needs of the family as well as attending to gender related roles such as house-chores (Greef & Malherbe, 2001). The findings Chapter shows that the participants indicated that they are aware of the role expectations of a wife in marriage and they make conscious efforts to adhere to what is expected of them.

Since 1984 other social systems, such as the legal system, have endorsed equality of partners in marriages in South Africa. It could be argued that cultural practices are informed by a gender discourse that constructs people's roles according to the biological sexual attribute of being male or female. Culture therefore endorses the gender identity framework by differentiating roles and behaviour expectations for wives and husbands. Both the gender and cultural frameworks place people into hierarchies in which men are placed at the top of the hierarchy.

Although the cultural and gender discourses give power to men in marriage the participants refer to themselves as partners in marriage. By constructing themselves as partners the participants position themselves in marriage as equal to their husbands. According to the South African Matrimonial Property Act of 1984 marriage is a partnership of equals. It could well be argued that the participants draw their construction of marriage from the way in which the legal system in South Africa defines the role of a married woman. Similarly, it could be argued that the participants are defying the cultural (and gender) ideology which places women in an unequal position in relation to their husbands.

The two different viewpoints articulate participants' conflicting expectations concerning how married women should behave in marriages. In the literature discussion of identity formation it was argued that a person's sense of self is dependent on the position that the individual holds in a particular context and time (Hermans, 2001b). The findings of this study further confirm the argument that human beings hold multiple identities (Mleczko, 2011; Schmidle, 2009). For example, it was evident in the findings Chapter that although the participants consider themselves to be equal partners in marriage they also construct themselves as submissive to their husbands. This shows how culture has a marked impact on individuals' daily lives (Clark, 2006) and that people behave in accordance with cultural dictates (De la Rey, 1992)

Similar to the cultural discourse the Christianity discourse also constructs a married woman as someone who is expected to be submissive to her husband. Christianity, as reflected in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3, consistently constructs the wife as

submissive and secondary in relation to her husband. The participants also used language which indicates that they have endorsed the Christian discourse around appropriate behaviour for married women (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.3).

Both culture and Christianity articulate specific ways in which men and women should behave in marriage, thereby constructing the role of a woman in marriage in a particular manner. For example, despite the changes in marriage (such as in dual-career marriages), women are still expected to attend to traditional cultural roles such as cooking. The findings of this study show that the participants still adhere to traditional expectations despite the fact that they construct themselves as empowered and equal to their husbands.

The participants' presentation of contradicting constructions in terms of how they perceive themselves is in keeping with what identity theories term multiplicity of identity (see Chapter 2, section 2.3). Firstly, in terms of personal identity the participants construct and position themselves as empowered and as a result see themselves as equal to their husbands. Secondly, by positioning themselves in the traditional, cultural and Christian discourses the participants acknowledge their social identity (as married women in a particular context). This type of positioning is what positioning theory refers to as the "me" attribute of the self, an attribute through which individuals are connected to the world and through which the social self is developed.

It could further be argued that by adhering to the social constructions and expectations related to their role as married women the participants are identifying

with other women in their social circle and thus meeting a need to belong. The findings Chapter showed how some of the participants associated their behaviour with other women in their lives (e.g. aunts, mothers). These participants also indicated that they observed how these women conduct or conducted themselves in their marriages and then used these observations to shape their own conduct within marriage. Some participants further indicated that they choose to adhere to what is expected of them by both culture and Christianity in order to avoid victimization. This aspect is discussed in more detail later in this Chapter. This aspect of the participants' constructions can also be linked to the literature concerning identity formation (Chapter 2, section 2.3) as it relates to the way in which people identify with others in order to feel accepted and to experience a sense of belonging.

The different constructions reflect what Turner (1985) referred to as self-categorization, which states that while people have a unique identity they also categorize themselves in groups. In line with group identity, people tend to see things from the group's perspective and behave in accordance with the norms, values and practices of the group (Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991).

The participants' talk indicates that they construct culture as static, as something that is not dynamic and changing. Traditional cultural practices regarding gender roles remain dominant in their lives and continue to inform their construction of marriage. For example, although the participants describe themselves as empowered outside their marriages, their home environments still require them to behave in accordance with traditional and cultural expectations. Similarly, Haddock and Zimmerman (2001) found that the changing position of women in marriages has not led to changes in

cultural practices. It is clear that the cultural principles that dictate how a woman should behave continue (Manganyi, 1973; Shope, 2006) to facilitate the construction of the social component of the self, as illustrated in the previous discussions around the development of the social self through what the positioning theory refers to as the "me" attribute of self.

These cultural principles are described by South African feminists as oppressive and exploitative of married women (Padayachee, 1997; Ssali, 2006), a description which is supported by the findings of this study. It is argued from a feminist viewpoint that cultural dictates promote unfair behaviour towards women and unfair distribution of power (De la Rey, 1997; Gouws, 1996). Black married women in South Africa are expected to continue behaving in ways that contradict social changes (Hoza, 2010). This study shows that despite the fact that as professional women the participants are significantly contributing to the maintenance of their households, they continue to construct themselves as oppressed by cultural behavioural expectations in married life. Participants construct a discourse around culture as the mechanism that oppresses professional married women and suppresses their inherent independence

The participants also see themselves as key to maintaining peace in their marriages. The Christian discourse contains the idea that "her paths are peaceful", meaning that a wife should be peaceful in her interactions with her husband. Similarly culture places the responsibility for keeping peace in marriage with the wife. As a result of these expectations the participants avoid challenging their husbands even when they do not agree with them. The participants expressed that "if it means keeping the peace at home I would not mind"; "in such instances I would bite my tongue". These

expectations are silencing women in marriage and as a result of this silence the women act in accordance with the construction of wives as submissive and followers in marriage. Other studies have also found that women are unable to voice their opinions as this would be in defiance of the collectivist tradition (which expects women to embrace everything without question). In addition, other studies also suggest that women are responsible for maintaining interpersonal harmony (Bartley et al., 2005).

The diction used in the previous examples illustrates that the participants see culture and Christianity as problematic and they experience self-pity around how they are treated and feel helpless about their situation. However, the language used by the participants indicates that they have consciously embraced the cultural and Christian discourses around how they should behave despite their disagreement with certain of the principles in these discourses ("I ascribe to traditional or cultural principles, meaning that I don't take the constitution home"; "I always go back into saying that I am a Christian and I have to apply certain Christian rules, whether I like it or not it is up to me to adopt because I if don't adjust to it then it will affect my happiness and satisfaction in my marriage").

It would also seem that the participants are unable to refuse to comply with the expectations. De la Rey (1992) argues that culture designates what an individual pays attention to and what an individual chooses to ignore. She further states that challenging any of the cultural norms becomes difficult as it may result in consequences, such as being isolated by people in one's community. This could explain why the participants in this study choose to embrace cultural dictates despite

their misgivings concerning these expectations. This decision is discussed further in the section of the discourse of fear.

Some participants argue that their Christian background has helped them come to terms with the roles they are expected to play within marriage. The participants whose behaviour is informed by culture also stated that they have learned how to interact appropriately within their marriages through observing the behaviour of their mothers and other women. The participants have thus identified with other women in their lives who have undergone similar experiences. The group of women with whom the participants identify includes their mothers, aunts and other women in their community who are married. This illustrates what social constructionism terms the construction of knowledge through interaction (Augustine, 2002). In addition it also highlights that the participants derive their identity from perceived membership of social groups (Duncan & Ratele, 2003). Through this identification the participants are able to adapt their behaviour in accordance with what is socially acceptable conduct for a married woman and they also obtain a sense of continuity with their past (De la Rey, 1992).

As discussed in the literature Chapter the Christian discourse expect married women to be submissive to their husbands and regards the husband as head of the family. In accordance with both the Christian and the cultural discourses the participants in this study view their husbands as heads of their families. The husband is therefore seen as the one who makes all major decisions. These constructions automatically place the woman in a dependent role where she constantly has to refer most, if not all, decisions to her husband.

While interviewing the participants I found that although some participants stated that they would make decisions about minor things (mostly decisions associated with traditionally female roles), some of the participants even consulted with and asked permission from their husbands for minor decisions. The women were therefore constructed and dependent on their husbands and as having to submit to their husbands.

5.3 Autonomy, independence and freedom discourses

Rhyne (1991) found that autonomy is a personal experience that is valued in dual-career marriages. The participants in this study are professionals who hold relatively senior positions at work and who are expected to be independent and autonomous in their jobs. However, the participants are also married and within their marital context a different kind of autonomy is expected.

Autonomy is therefore constructed from two competing and contradictory discourses based on the context within which the participants operate. The first discourse is the individualist discourse towards autonomy, in which the participants construct themselves as autonomous and independent. This individualistic construction of autonomy was discussed in the literature Chapter (section 2.5) as the more dominant construction of autonomy. The second construction of autonomy relates to the collectivist discourse, whereby the participants acknowledge the constraints that marriage places on their individual autonomy. From the viewpoint of this discourse an individual's autonomy is dependent on how it would impact on other people (Chirkov et al., 2003).

In constructing their reality in relation to autonomy the participants expressed themselves in personal terms with words like “I” and “me”, thereby endorsing the individualistic construction of autonomy (Taylor, 2002; Triandis, 1995). These expressions of self are in contrast to words that would construct the participants as “us” or “we” in accordance with the collectivistic framework. These constructions show that the participants are taking control and ownership of their constructions around autonomy (“autonomy to me is a right”; “autonomy for me is the right to choose, the right to be what I want to be”). Furthermore in constructing their discourse on autonomy the participants refer to themselves as being autonomous prior to marriage ("I believe as far as autonomy is concerned, before I got married as a person, I am as autonomous as one can define the word autonomy”). This extract shows that the women experienced changes in their autonomy as a result of their marriages.

The participants also construct autonomy as something that is determined by the marriage context within which they operate (“There is always a conflict between my autonomy as an individual and being a wife as well as being a working professional"; “even though in my marriage as this point, I am given the right to do things my way, it’s not like I can do everything my way, you always have to consult on certain things"; “marriage for me is a totally different institution in the sense that I ascribe to traditional or cultural principles”).

The participants thus construct their autonomy in marriage as something that is the result of negotiation or consultation with their husbands. This construction of autonomy acknowledges that in marriage a woman cannot act independently from

her husband. Although in the extract in the preceding paragraph the participant refers to her individual rights, Manganyi (1973) argues that the wife's rights in marriage are transferred to her husband. Despite the fact that the source referred to here is relatively old it does confirm the finding that traditionally discourses concerning the role of married women have not changed substantially. However, the way in which the participants construct their autonomy has not changed. The participants see themselves as autonomous and independent although they acknowledge that marriage constructs them as less autonomous.

However, the participants' behaviour at home is different to their professional behaviour and is strongly influenced by the social expectations of married women. The participants stated that when they are at home they ascribe to traditional and Christian expectations associated with their role as married women. At home the participants consciously change their behaviour to adopt a different disposition, that of a submissive and traditional wife. There are variable reasons for this behaviour. Some of the participants argue that their behaviour helps them gain acceptance from their husbands while others argue that it helps to emphasise to their husbands that they are still the figure of authority at home. For example, the participants state: "if it means keeping the peace at home…I find that I get to compromise"; "in my family I would like to see peace"; "I know you have to be submissive"; "I understand that my husband is the head of the family…but then most of the time he has the ultimate say"; "with men it's a matter of my wife subsume herself into my "culture"." The two competing discourses thus reproduce and maintain the participants' lack of autonomy by arguing for the necessity of appearing less powerful in the home while

at the same time resisting this discourse by constructing the Black professional woman as autonomous in her own right and in the workplace.

5.4 The discourse of power

Power is a social construct that articulates supremacy and is used to shape social interactions and place people in hierarchies (Parker, 1990). According to Foucault power and power relations are seen in everyday interactions and practices (Kotze', 1994). It is evident from Chapter 2 that gender is a social construct that is used to distribute power, responsibility and rights as well as to justify unequal treatment amongst people. Three discourses on power can be identified in the participants' talk; each is briefly discussed in the sections below.

5.4.1 Participants as powerless

In the first discourse, participants construct women in marriages as powerless. Two dominant social discourses (Christianity and culture) that continue to construct a man [husband] as having power over a woman [wife] were identified in the participants' talk. For example, the participants expressed that as women they are expected to be subservient. As a result they are not able to position themselves as having power when compared to their husbands but instead construct themselves as powerless in their marriages.

The distribution of power along gender roles is historical and has been reported n many other studies. For example, Rall (1984) found that in marriage the men make all major decisions in relation to the family, deciding even on the lifestyle to follow. In marriage a wife is placed in a less important role and her husband is constructed as a powerful figure. Even though Rall's (1984) study is almost 30 years old the participants in the current study still stated that power is given to men within marriage. This shows that despite changes in women's roles in societies and within marriages they continue to be constructed as less powerful and important within marriage. Recent research also confirms that husbands are seen as more powerful than wives and, as a result, men make major decisions in marriages while women make decisions relating to day-to-day operational issues (Bartley et al., 2005).

The participants in the study are also placed in a position that renders them dependent on their husbands for various things. For example, despite the participants' financial independence they still consult with their husbands regarding how to spend their money. Thus, despite their financial power the participants are subtle about their financial independence. The words used by the participants clearly articulates this: "I don't want him to know that I earn more than him, I just let him feel free as a husband, he'll bring whatever and I bring whatever"; "I personally do everything in the house… because I love beautiful things". By choosing to understate their financial independence the participants are continuing to construct an image of the husband as financially powerful or more powerful than the wife ("I am not able to show off my financial achievement or openly take pride in my achievements because that would be seen as if you are trying to make your husband look small"; "It's a very interesting dynamic because I find that I have to constantly

affirm his position as a husband"). In doing so the participants reproduce socially constructed identities of married women in relation to their husbands.

Although the participants are not completely happy with their less powerful status and resistance can be identified in their talk, the language they use shows that they contribute to the reproduction and legitimizing of male power and dominance in their marriages. This is reflected in the following statements: "When it comes to dealing with your husband you end up compromising your situation"; "The challenge there is to bite my tongue"; "I would not do anything without his consent because it would be read differently"; "As a professional I know how to draw the line at home". The participants are also responsible for the co-construction of the powerless female identity.

5.4.2 Participants as equally powerful

Although the participants construct themselves as powerless they would also like to be in a power sharing position with their husbands. This is shown through the participants' use of language. One of the participants states that "I understand that my husband is the head of the family meaning that we are partners in the running of the household and the business of the house, but then most of the time he has the ultimate say". Other statements are: "I am the neck and he is the head, and the head cannot move without the neck"; "we are partners in the running of the family, yet my husband has the final say". The word partner denotes someone of equal importance, yet the participants view their husbands as heads of the households. It is possible that the participants' use of a language of equality is a form of subtle

resistance to the dominant discourses that give power to men. The subtle resistance of the exclusive power assigned to men by the dominant social discourses in marriage suggests that the participants are not able to openly express their dissatisfaction. This could be due to the possible consequences or social sanctions that they may face if they express this dissatisfaction (De la Rey, 1992; Shope, 2006).

5.4.3 Participants as empowered

The participants also construct themselves as empowered in relation to their personal identity, especially in the work context. At work the participants hold positions of power and are able to exercise that power with the men at work ("I know my males very well. I have males I interact with at work, I have a male at home, so when I am at work I become the lawyer, I know that there might be people whom I have to exercise my authority on because of my work"). By constructing themselves as empowered the participants are communicating that despite the cultural and Christian discourses that construct them as subordinate they have some level of power in other spheres of their lives. The constant reference to their empowered status is a subtle reminder that they can be as (or more) powerful as their husbands and that the dominant social construction of a husband as powerful is relative and limited to the marital institution.

It is clear from the previous sections that the participants are constantly juggling their behaviour in order to be accepted within a particular social context. In marriage the participants understand the history associated with the role of women and they make

a conscious effort to embrace the expectation. As a result the participants embrace their disempowered situation. In the next section I outline some of the reasons why the participants accept this disempowered status.

5.5 Fear and helplessness discourses

Despite their desire to be treated as equal partners in marriage the participants choose to embrace the expectations set by the dominant social discourses in order for them to remain accepted members of their societies. Sullivan (2006) found that although most of the participants in his study (married women) were capable of taking positions and were aware of their power to contribute financially, they chose not to do so. Sullivan (2006) attributed this decision to the way in which gender structures how women seek influence. Thus the participants in this study frequently choose a non-demanding attitude when asking for their husbands' input and in so doing they are attentive to protecting their husbands' position. This finding is similar to the findings regarding the participants' choice to conform in order to remain accepted in their socio-cultural context. This is in agreement with Motsemme's (2002) conclusions that women choose to remain silent in order to protect themselves in patriarchal societies that expect them to remain unseen and unchallenging to males who are deemed superior to them. She argues further that Black women consciously assume secondary roles in order to avoid challenging Black men's power. Challenging this power would place Black women in opposition to societal expectation. She also states that women are socially discouraged from challenging men in order to sustain the patriarchal structure and the myth of the man as supporter, protector and provider.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986) every individual has a need to belong and to become a member of a social group. Individuals therefore comply with certain rules in order for them to be accepted (Duncan & Ratele, 2003). This confirms the findings of this study, which are that the participants comply with societal expectations in order to achieve a sense of belonging.

SIT argues that we tend to identify with groups with whom we associate ourselves (Turner, 1982). In identifying with groups we then construct our identity according to the groups' values and norms so that we are in turn accepted by the groups. As a result of a need to belong and to be accepted the participants in this study embrace their constructed identity as married women. Failure to embrace these socially and culturally constructed norms would result in the participants experiencing rejection from society. For example, one of the participants stated in the interview that "you are bound by culture to behave in a certain way. It is about how you are brought up, you still embrace culture you don't want to be a victim". Another participant also referred to the fear of being judged for questioning and challenging culture ("in my situation I have also found that I got to compromise because of fear of being criticized").

The above discussion illustrates that while the participants are unhappy with their position in marriage they do not express their dissatisfaction due to fear ("I fear cultural discrimination"; "fear of being criticized"). The language used by the participants also suggests that their behaviour in marriage is informed by the fear of possible victimization. Women are afraid of being isolated by society or of being

viewed as defiant. As a result they do not contest the treatment received despite their dissatisfaction with this treatment.

5.6 The discourse of satisfaction

Bradbury and Cobb (2003) describe satisfaction as the component of psychological well-being that reflects how people evaluate their lives as a result of their social interaction. Spouses expect to experience satisfaction in marriage (Rhyne, 1991) and this expected satisfaction is associated with issues such as power sharing, role division, sexuality and conflict resolution (McCabe, 1999).

The participants in this study stated that they are not completely satisfied in their marriages. This dissatisfaction seems to stem from the failure of marriage to acknowledge the changing position of women and the way in which marriage continues to disempower women. For example, although the participants are contributing to maintaining the standard of living in their households, they are able to play an equal role in making family decisions. This aspect of their dissatisfaction correlates with expected levels of satisfaction in relation to power sharing (McCabe, 1999).

In the previous discussions I indicated how the participants used language to subtly express their unhappiness around the ways in which they are constructed in society and in their marriages. The subtle expression of unhappiness could be a reflection of the participants' dissatisfaction around how they are constructed. The fact that the participants constantly refer to themselves as being empowered and being the 'neck'

in the running of the household indicates dissatisfaction around the dominant constructions of a married woman as less powerful and a follower in her marriage.

Some of the statements that the participants used ("I also mentally prepare myself as I am going home that leave the very assertive manager at work and be the non-assertive wife because the dynamics are very different") suggest that they make a conscious effort to adopt a different position when they are at home. This decision is based on the fear of being victimized, as discussed in the preceding section. Sullivan (2006) found that the traditional gender hierarchy encourages partners to overlook women's contributions. Sullivan's (2006) study found that both women and men repeatedly speak of women's efforts to persuade men to treat them as equal partners in marriage. He argues that this indicates how the dominant power structure continues to subtly guide the communication processes between couples.

The participants in this study did not openly express their dissatisfaction during the interviews. While this could linearly be linked to the possible fear of being sanctioned or isolated it could also reflect the fact that it is not culturally acceptable for women to state their dissatisfaction with what is prescribed by culture. This further illustrates that women are continuously being silenced by society. However, it should also be noted that the participants acknowledged that it is not possible to be fully satisfied in life, and that it is therefore also not possible to be completely satisfied in marriage.

By allowing themselves to be silenced and embracing the construction of women in marriages as dependent and less powerful the participants contribute to the

maintenance of these constructions. The participants are actively involved in maintaining socio-cultural constructions regarding the role of women in marriages. This is shown by their expressed complacency around their situation, with metaphors such as "*lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*"[2] or their acceptance of the practice of *lobola*.

5.7 The construction of the participants' identity in dual-career marriages

Dual-career marriage emphasizes equality at home, breaking of gender roles and egalitarian principles (Silberstein, 1992). Although the participants' marriages easily fit the description of dual-career marriages, they also operate in a cultural context that prescribes behaviour expectations that are different to those of other women in dual-career marriages. For example, in the literature reviewed for this study women in other contexts do not seem to be expected to be submissive to their husbands (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Hardill & Watson, 2004; Larkin & Ragan, 2008). At the same time, Sullivan (2006) has provided compelling evidence of the slow rate of change in Western industrialized countries. He argues that gender change happens incrementally despite the rise in dual-career and dual-earner marriages.

However, the participants in this study have constructed a different identity to that of traditional wives in Black South African society. Traditional wives are expected to be both submissive and dependent on their husbands (Manganyi, 1973; Shope, 2006).

[2] Literally translated this metaphor says that a married woman should be buried at her in-laws. Traditionally a married woman was not expected to divorce herself from her husband and her in-laws regardless of how unhappy she might be in her marriage.

Although the participants acknowledge and embrace the cultural and Christian identity of not being overly autonomous in marriage, they also describe themselves as autonomous outside of marriage and, at the very least, as equal to their marriage partners. This suggests a subtle resistance to the dominant identity, but this resistance does not go as far as constructing their identities in the same way as women in dual-career marriages in Western societies. The contradictory power discourses discussed in section 5.4 are connected to this particular construction of identity.

Previous discussions in this Chapter have focused on the participants' changing behaviour in differing contexts and on the construction of multiple roles in relation to the "I" and "me" components of the self. Social Identity theory argues that different social contexts may cause an individual to think, feel and act on different levels of the self depending on whether the context relates to the personal, family or national level of self (Turner, 1982). In addition, positioning theory argues that the self is a fluctuation of positioning (Hermans, 2001b). The participants in this study indicated that when they are at home they behave on the family level of self, while when they are at work they behave on the individual and professional level of self. This is a further illustration of how the participants contribute to maintaining the socially constructed identity of married women.

The literature review Chapter showed how the position of a married professional woman illustrates the possibility of multiple social identities. Each identity has its own expectations based on context. Thus, within a social identity a person fulfils the expectations of the different roles and by implication behaves in accordance with the

norms of a particular group and role expectation. In order to comply with social, cultural, religious and professional expectations the participants in this study have developed multiple identities that they invoke in different contexts. They are also able to move flexibly between roles. This supports the argument that the self operates on a continuum that creates a healthy balance in human functioning (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010).

The cultural discourse referred to in this study fosters interdependence and group consensus. Married women are therefore not expected to act independently. This is contrary to Western culture, which fosters independence. As a result married women in Western cultures tend to emphasize their individuality despite their multiple social identities (Arthur & Parker, 2004). Although the participants in this study express the need for independence, autonomy, satisfaction and equality in their marriages, they maintain separate identities in different contexts as a result of fear of social sanctions and marital discord.

The reality that the participants create is a result of the constructions they make in their interaction with other married women who behave in ways that are dictated by both the cultural and Christian discourses. Similarly Rapmund (2002) found that people's construction of their reality is consistent with the ideas of their broader social and cultural context. The understandings that the participants have around the discourses of culture and Christianity therefore construct and shape their sense of autonomy in marriage. In this way the women construct themselves as somewhat autonomous. These constructions of autonomy in marriage are associated with the social discourse of collectivism, which fosters group consensus.

The above examples illustrate that while the participants are attempting to adhere to social expectations in relation to their role as married women they also behave in ways that are typical of capable and independent people. Furthermore, the participants have constructed a position where, if they feel strongly that they need to behave in a certain manner, they are able to do so despite the dominant social discourses. For example: “If I need a dish washer and he disagrees I will buy it anyway because it is for my good”; “if I need an expensive furniture and he does not agree I will buy it anyway because I love beautiful things”; "Sometimes I even ignore the fact that he is not happy about certain things which I am happy with"; "because sometimes you even end-up becoming selfish and saying what matters is about how I feel”; ‘if my husband does not do things that I reasonably think I am entitled to I’ve got the right to I just go ahead and I do them.” These sentiments could be interpreted as indicative of an emerging phenomenon in marriages in the Black community where wives are beginning to establish their assertiveness and independence and are being to contest matters about which they feel strongly.

In summary married professional women have dual identities that place different expectations on them. One identity is that of being a married woman within a cultural and Christian context while the other identity is being a professional in a society that expects them to behave in an autonomous manner. This mixture of professional status and traditional culture results in the participants operating in a different type of dual-career marriage to that described in the literature. While dual-career marriage advocates for egalitarian principles, traditional marriage within the South African context advocates for patriarchal principles. The participants integrate their different social identities by consciously adopting different behaviour in different

contexts. Although they construct themselves as empowered and autonomous within their individual self, they also construct themselves as less autonomous within their marriages. This is in keeping with what SIT defines as multiple social identities.

5.8 Answering the research questions

This research aimed to identify the discourses that a sample of Black professional women in dual-career marriages use to construct marriage and their autonomy in marriage. In addition, the researched aimed to investigate how these women's construction of autonomy in turn influences their construction of marital satisfaction in their marriages. The questions that were asked in this research are:

- What discourses inform Black professional women in dual-career marriages' constructions about their marriages?
- How do they construct their autonomy in their marriages?
- How does their understanding of marriage and their construction of autonomy in their marriages inform their construction of marital satisfaction?

In relation to the first objective the study found that cultural and Christian discourses are dominant in informing the participants' constructions of marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction. The participants in this study construct their marriages in terms of traditional cultural discourses. The study further illustrates that the participants endorse the way that Christian discourses construct marriage. These discourses both expect married women to be submissive and dependent on their husbands. By accepting the social construction regarding appropriate behaviour for married women

the participants contribute to maintaining the construction of women within the Christian and cultural frameworks.

In relation to the second objective, traditional marriage gives the husband authority to decide on the lifestyle to follow and this gives the husband authority to make decisions concerning the wife's autonomy. The Christian discourse is also powerful in informing how the participants construct their autonomy. The participants construct their autonomy on two levels. On the individual level of self they construct themselves as autonomous whereas on the socio-cultural level of self they construct themselves as less autonomous.

With regards to the third objective, the participants' construction of marriage and autonomy informed their construction of marital satisfaction. For example, the participants indicated that they would like to be treated as equal to their husbands and they would like to be allowed the freedom to be independent and make independent decisions without consulting their husbands. These statements all suggest that the participants are not fully satisfied in marriage.

Although the participants are not completely satisfied in marriage they have embraced the cultural and Christian discourses regarding appropriate behaviour for married woman. This acceptance helps them to be somewhat content with what is expected of them by the dominant social discourses. The participants further acknowledge that they cannot be fully satisfied in marriage, and this is why they express some level of contentment in relation to their marriages.

5.9 Reflections on the study

Social constructionism and qualitative research acknowledge that the research process cannot be objective since the researcher has his or her own subjective experiences, values and beliefs. In addition, the research process is prompted by questions the researcher wishes to answer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This study was initiated as a result of the experiences that the researcher had in her own marriage. The aim was to identify how other professional married women construct their experiences in marriage.

The researcher's experiences during her first few years of marriage to what she had anticipated when she entered the marital relationship. Having been a professional prior to marriage, the researcher expected her marriage to acknowledge this professionalism and allow her to be independent and autonomous. However, within the marriage context she found that she was expected to be submissive and dependent on her husband. In addition, she was expected to consult her husband when making decisions, even when the decision could have been taken autonomously.

During the interviews it was therefore easy for the researcher to understand and relate to the participants' constructions of marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction. Although the mutual understandings of the constructions were beneficial for both the researcher and the participants, the researcher's experiences may have limited the extent to which she probed or interrogated some of the responses from the participants. However, the mutual experiences also made it

easier for the participants to share their own experiences without fear of being judged.

For social constructionists and qualitative researchers the researcher is seen as an instrument of data collection and analysis (Gibbs, 2002). The researcher is as important as the participant in constructing meaning. However, it is also important for the researcher to remain open to how other people construct the same phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As a result despite the researcher having her own construction of marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction, she remained open to understanding how the participants constructed the same phenomenon. The interview therefore took the form of a conversation between two professional married women sharing their experiences of marriage. During the interviews the researcher would at times articulate her similar experiences when appropriate. This is in keeping with a feminist approach to research and confirms that in qualitative research the researcher is part of the construction of meaning and data collection (Matsumoto, 1996).

During the analysis of the data, although the researcher remained true to what the participants said she was also able to draw on her own experiences. As a result the analysis of the findings was relatively easy for the researcher. However, her in-depth understanding of the participants' construction could have influenced how she identified discourses and presented the findings, a limitation that will also be referred to in the next section.

5.10 Limitations of the study

This study used the social constructionist paradigm to make meaning of the discourses under investigation as articulated by the participants in the study. As a result the study presents the subjective experiences of participants without necessarily allowing the reader to make generalizations from the findings. While social constructionism has been applauded for its emphasis on subjectivity this subjectivity has also resulted in criticism. Critics of social constructionism argue that social constructionism presents philosophical responses to issues and fails to give concrete answers. Social constructionism is thus criticized for not providing absolute answers to issues (Ferreira et al., 1998).

Although social constructionism places emphasis on the role of the researcher as part of the construction of meaning, this is also disadvantageous as it introduces the possibility of subjectivity into the research context. For example, this research topic was informed by the experiences that the researcher herself faced as a professional woman in a dual-career marriage. As a result there is a possibility that the study did not identify all the constructions of the subject under investigation. In addition, the researcher's understanding of the experiences of the participants made it challenging for her to put the constructions clearly for the reader as she might have assumed that these constructions were easy for everyone to understand. The researcher might also have found the discourses that she wanted to find due to her subjective relationship with the topic of research.

Furthermore, the researcher was 'sensitive' to the sensitivity of the topic. This resulted in her allowing the participants to avoid issues with which they were uncomfortable. In doing so the researcher could possibly have missed important information. On reflection she identified with the pain that the participants experienced, as well as with their attempt to appear brave and fulfilled. The researcher's experience of empathy with the participants may have allowed them to share more in-depth information.

Social constructionism is further criticized because it is seen as encouraging relativism (Ferreira et al., 1998). Social constructionism views all stories as equally meaningful and this has the potentially to lead to radical individualism in which there are no limits. Within this study this implies that the participants' constructions of meaning are no more valid than any other constructions that could have emerged. Social constructionist methodology is therefore not able to allow for the possibility of making inferences around common constructions. It rather allows any construction to be evaluated as meaningful.

Another criticism of the study could be that due to the methodology used in this study and the aim of the study (to understand the discourses constructed by professional women in dual-career marriages) only a few women were interviewed. As such the findings cannot be generalized to all Black South African professional women in dual-career marriages. However, the purpose of this study was not to gain generalizeable findings from a representative sample of participants, but rather to identify discourses in the talk of selected Black South African women in dual-career

marriages. A theoretical framework (social constructionism) and methodology (qualitative) that were appropriate to this aim were thus chosen.

Furthermore the study only looked at a particular age group and was not broadened to include all age groups within dual-career marriages. Broadening the study to include professional women of other age groups and women who have been married for longer could have resulted in the identification of more constructions. Such possible differences would have allowed the research to draw a comparison between the different age groups in terms of the discourses under investigation.

A series of research studies conducted by Nisbett and Wilson (1977) found that higher order mental processes such as making judgements and decisions leading to voluntary actions are non-conscious. As a result they argue that what people articulate as causes or effects of their behaviour is based on prior beliefs around what happened. Therefore, it these reports happen to be correct this is not a result of what they consciously know but because a result of correct prior beliefs. It could therefore be argued that the study is further limited as analysing the participants' language may not provide access to the non-conscious reasons for their behaviour. In the same way, the participants' reports that they have voluntarily or consciously chosen to adhere to cultural dictates could also be criticised given the possibility that these decisions are not actually conscious. Therefore, followers of Nisbett and Wilson's (1977) school of thought could criticise the research findings because they are based on the participants' prior beliefs about their experiences in marriage rather than on their actual and conscious experiences. However, from a social constructionist perspective, the research findings indicate how participants in this

study constructed their experiences in marriage and it was not within the scope of this study to explore unconscious processing.

Despite the above mentioned limitations steps were taken in the study to ensure reliability and validity. During the interviews the researcher constantly checked with the participants to ensure that she understood what they said, in order to limit her own bias and interpretation. Both qualitative research and social constructionism place emphasis on understanding the phenomenon under investigation and ensuring that the researcher captures what the participants say (Miller, 2000). This is done in order to ensure that the analysis reflects what the participants are saying. The project supervisors (the late Professor Johan Schoeman and Professor Claire Wagner) also played a useful role in questioning certain aspects of the analysis. Although it was clear during the data gathering stage that by the sixth interview the data obtained was the same, the researcher continued interviewing more participants to ensure that a point of saturation was reached.

In addition, it is important to note that in qualitative research and discourse analysis the constructions or articulations of participants remain open to discussion and further analysis. While the study only presented an analysis from the researcher's viewpoint it should be borne in mind that discourse analysis is multifaceted and not every researcher will agree with the manner in which discourse analysis was conducted in this study. The findings in this study are therefore open to re-interpretation.

5.11 Recommendations for future research

In relation to what was discussed in the previous section and in light of the limited research conducted on dual-career marriages in South Africa, it is recommended that further research be conducted on the topic of dual-career marriages within the South African context. This study focused on one aspect of the challenges faced by professional women in dual-career marriages, the construction of autonomy and marital satisfaction, future research should explore other challenges in dual-career marriages, such as sharing of power, division of house-chores, childrearing as well as comparison of men and women's construction of dual-career marriages. This study also did not explore the possible impact that the dynamics of having children could have on how the participants construct their identity in marriage and this is something that could be explored in future research.

In conducting these studies it will also be worthwhile to use other research methods so as to enable to researchers to draw on different data and make comparisons. These methods could include quantitative research methods or a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. For example, international research that has been conducted on various topics about dual-career marriages could be conducted in South Africa to determine whether similar trends emerge. Some of the quantitative research studies recommended below could make use of data collection methods such as questionnaires with large samples to explore various topics within the field of dual-career marriages.

- The challenges and solutions of dual-career marriages at different phases of the family life cycle (Haddock, Zimmerman, Lyness & Ziemba, 1991).
- Issues that contribute to divorce with dual-career couples (Silberstein, 1992). In line with the findings in this research quantitative research could explore issues that impact satisfaction in couples in dual-career marriages.
- Since the study highlighted some of the coping strategies used by the participants it could be worthwhile to conduct quantitative research on adaptive strategies for dual-career couples. This research would be similar to research conducted by Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba and Curent (2001).

Furthermore, it might be beneficial for future research to compare the experiences of professionals in dual-career marriages with those of women in traditional marriages in Black South African communities to determine whether their constructions of marriage, autonomy and satisfaction vary significantly. Moreover it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal research of married women over a period of time to investigate whether the discourses surrounding marriage change over time. Similarly, the discourses of women in different life stages could also be explored.

This study has contributed to the broader discourse and literature on dual-career marriages, especially the literature on dual-career marriages in the South African context. It will be valuable if some of the information gained in this study is used for further research with a different focus from the one in the present study. For example, traditional cultural discourse still appears to be dominant in the identity of Black South Africans. Research on dual-career marriages frequently refers to the construct of egalitarianism (Arthur & Parker, 2004; Crossfield et al., 2005;

Silberstein, 1992). Egalitarian marriages are ones where both spouses are breadwinners and where domestic chores and childrearing are shared according to aptitude and time availability (Silberstein, 1992). The principles of egalitarianism endorse that roles in marriage are constantly evolving through negotiations between spouses rather than being prescribed and fixed. The findings of this research suggest that the principles of egalitarianism are not currently applicable in the South African context. It might therefore be worthwhile to specifically research how the construct of egalitarianism is constructed by South Africans in dual-career marriages.

The study also highlighted that despite the empowered status of women in dual-career marriages these women adopt identities at home that contradict this position. Future research should explore the coping strategies used by women in dual-career marriages. This research may contribute towards empowering other women in similar situations with the skills to cope.

5.12 Concluding remarks

The current study identified Christian and cultural discourses as dominant in constructing the participants' views of marriage. Both these discourses construct a married woman as powerless and expect her to be submissive to her husband. While the participants embrace and contribute to the construction of married women as submissive, they also subtly construct themselves as empowered. The participants' construction of themselves as empowered is an illustration that they resist the dominant construction of a wife as submissive. The study also found that

this resistance is expressed subtly due to fear of being rejected by society and marital discord.

Overall, it was found that the participants in the study viewed themselves as powerless in some instances. However, at other times they viewed themselves as equally powerful or even empowered. This relates well to the multiple constructions of self as outlined in the discussion on SIT.

The participants in the study also present two different identities. The one identity is the identity of being a married woman and the other identity is that of being a professional person in the work context. The two identities are associated with contradictory behavioural expectations; as professional women the participants are expected to be independent while as wives they are expected to be submissive. This study found that the participants make conscious efforts in their daily interactions to adapt their behaviour to suit the context within which they operate at a given point in time. As a result the participants construct themselves as both autonomous and less autonomous depending on the context within which they operate at a given time in their daily interactions.

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Appendix A:

CONSENT FORM

Thank you for volunteering to participate in the study. The aim of this study is to explore and understand the experiences and perceptions of professional women in dual career marriages. As a professional married woman, I have experienced some challenges in my marriage and it would be interesting to see if the experiences are consistent amongst other professional women in dual career marriages, hence this research study.

Participation consists of one interview which will last between an hour and two hours. The interview will be recorded for purposes of transcription and data analysis at a later stage of the research process. Information obtained from the interview will be kept confidential. As a result of the personal nature of the research topic, should you wish to consult a psychologist or counsellor to debrief following the interview process and within 4 months from the date of the interview, I will arrange for you to see a psychologist at no cost to you.

You are also encouraged to terminate the interview at any time you feel uncomfortable continuing.

Your contribution to developing understanding in the field of marriage is valuable.

Appendix B:

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Ria's transcript

Q: As a black professional woman, what is your understanding of autonomy and how does your understanding influence your overall perception of marital satisfaction?

A: Ok, autonomy for me is the right to choose, the right to be what I want to be in a marriage, the right to do things I want to do in a marriage. Not to say that I do shouldn't be questioned but really the right to be free in any manner that I'd like to conduct myself as a person and be satisfied. How that contributes to my marital satisfaction, I realize that even though in my marriage as this point, I am given the right to do things my way, its not like I can do everything my way, you always have to consult on certain things. Sometimes you find that cultural norms come as a barrier in doing certain things in your marriage, which you always thought you would easily do, and it becomes more problematic if your husband comes from a family that has a very strong cultural background and he brings that into your marriage in that instance you are not able to act as freely as you would have wanted to and hence the dissatisfaction would come in. In a way it says a person will not be fully satisfied in a marriage, for example, in my marriage among other key issues is the naming of children.

I thought my husband and I would name our children and this became a problem when he wanted our child to be named after his family and this created problems in our marriage and it affected my marriage and there wasn't satisfaction on my side as a married woman because I felt I've got the right to decide but also with my husband the most sad part is when my husband brought his family culture into my family to say this is how things are going to be done because at his home they are expecting him to do things in a particular way and that on its won can make you as a couple to fight extensively so that it ends up affecting the marriage itself and also you as a person emotionally but also you might as well end up having a marriage that is not stable because each time that issue around naming of children props in it becomes a very sore point to fight about in a marriage. So I would say a person will not be fully satisfied even though you know you've got the right to chose, the right to do anything in your marriage. No matter how liberal your husband can be the fact that he would bring his family background into your family that on its own becomes a problem.

Q: So you are saying that it is not possible for a professional woman to be fully autonomous?

A: Ya it is not possible for a professional woman to be autonomous given the cultural background that we all as couples come from in our marriages. With us as women it

is easy to leave that which you were used to or brought up with, but with men it's a matter of my wife subsume herself into my culture because according to black culture it says you are married into a family, you are married into a person's culture, into a person's way of doing things, so husbands would normally impose (even as professionals) that which you used to be their practice at their original home into this new home and which I think should not be the case hence that makes it very difficult for professional black women to be autonomous in their marriages. It makes it very very difficult. I mean you've got the right, you know you have all those rights, you are empowered sometimes you can be a very strong feminist but when it comes to dealing with your husband you end up compromising your situation in certain circumstances; maybe also depending on your character. Some women end up fighting the situation which I also did, I fought the situation as a black person but also as a spiritual person I ended up looking at the spiritual side of things to say in my family I would like to see peace and what would God maybe require of me. I ended up looking at it spiritually and saying God will take care of the situation and in deed really God did that; although now the situation as is I was able to name my child, using my name but on the other side (also) using my husband's cultural name. My name seems to be dominant and it does not look like my husband really likes it because ever since the child was born, he avoids using her names but opt for nicknames. That on its own is not a nice thing and also it will not be a good thing when a child grows up to understand what has led to her being called the other name and daddy calling her the other. She will not be happy and she'd realize that probably there wasn't harmony when I was born and that its not necessarily the case, we were both happy but for the fact that the other party wanted to impose his cultural background onto my family, which I call my new family, my husband and I as family but he wanted to bring his family which his mother and father's background into my family which I wanted throughout to avoid in my marriage.

Q: So the two things you have mentioned is cultural issues affect a woman's ability to be autonomous. So if there were no cultural backlogs professional men would define the new marital setup in their own way, but then the culture is always coming in the way.

A: It is always coming in to shape up what your marriage is and it will continue to be there because people are from background and knowing with us as black women it starts with lobola. The moment your husband pays lobola, it says he's got the whole dominion over you. Although we always want to fight that but I can tell you the bottom line is that it is the case. They will not talk it in words but practice says that is the case. It's like they'll always say to you must change the surname but now our husbands seems more relaxed in getting us change our surnames into theirs because maybe due to the double-barrel system that is used today but still they insist that we must change our names into theirs because they believe that they are marrying us and the fact that they paid lobola is like now you are theirs. On its own it takes us back to the period of oppression where woman have always been

subservient or rather submissive to their husbands. It boils down to that. That is still existing although we would want to fight and argue that it does not exist, it does exist and you'd' mainly see it around issues concerning culture, whose culture has to prevail. I also come from a background where there is culture. I might as well decide to impose my won culture onto my husband but because already this family is know as the Mokabane's family, which is my husbands family and not mine, I have to raise my children that way they grow the Mokabane's. This also become a problem if my husband wants to use his cultural background in raising the children.

Yes definitely it says I would not have much of a say although we may dispute and say we do have. In terms of our spiritual background which is a key point that helps us to reach a compromise, my husband is able to let other things lie low because of our spiritual background; because when you looking at our spiritual background as Christians, you need to make sure that there is peace, you need to reach out to the other person, you need to give the other person at least the right to do things her own way and ensure that the other person is satisfied. That is the only point really I am saying we are able to amicably agree on certain things BUT for the culture. If my husband was a very staunch cultural person I can tell you we'll be saying something else today. He is a cultural person because that still inact in him but the fact that he is a Christian and a very strong spiritual person, his cultural background gets overtaken by the fact that he is a Christian, he is able to compromise certain things which could have been of culture which have been and still are very oppressive.

So he can try to compromise them and let the spiritual part prevail instead. I can tell you families that are not really spiritual can be saying something different, because I still see culture oppressing us as professional women. I am seeing that also in my marriage even if my husband is a spiritual persona, but I am saying his spiritual background is able to lesson his cultural practice.

Q: But at the same time, my understanding of Christianity is that the spiritual background also says the man is the head and the woman should be submissive. So which informs which, is it that cultural background that informs the spiritual background or vice versa in terms of submissiveness?

A: It depends on a family which one you want to make dominant. In terms of culture men are acknowledging the fact that culture is oppressive and they would say they wont do that but yet you still find them oppressing us not being aware. Its like they already inact in them, they already know I am the man, I am the family man and also in terms of the spiritual background the man is the head of the family but because women are known as helpers, they acknowledge the fact that they can not do with us. But in terms of culture men are standing up to ensure that the household is run by them but spiritually they know that they can not do it alone, that they need wives as helpers and that makes them acknowledge or role in their lives. The man is the

head and the wife is the neck and if the neck is not there, the head will not be able to turn sideways, hence they acknowledge us.

Q: In the realm of professionalism, you both being professionals, do you see yourself as a helper or as an equal, in your relationship?

A: I see myself as both because there are certain things that I'd want my husband to play as his role as head of family would have to play and I would not see him doing that but then I will do them. The good thing is that he'll come and acknowledge and thank me for taking such initiatives. It is something else if he does not even acknowledge the good that I am doing. I at this point see myself in that instance as helping the head, which can also be looked at as me being the head.

Men acknowledge behind our backs that we run the household, we are quick-thinkers, but culture refuses them to acknowledge our roles. Culture say they must wear the pride of blanket and look at themselves as this strong people, who can stamp on us that we are nothing and we should be taken care of by them. Even for us to be professional that was not allowed before and we've got other women even now, who are not allowed to study further and even work because they intimidate their husbands if they get to work or earn a salary that is higher than that of their husbands, it becomes a very serious problem.

It also depends on characters and also different marriages. Some men would appreciate the income while others would not. For example when my husband was not working, he did not feel inferior by me brining in the salary, he looked at my earnings as that of the family and this make the family more harmonious. I also did not make him feel like as a head he has to go out and work and bring a salary instead whatever I brought into the family was for both of us and that is the spiritual side of me because when the bible says the two are one I believe that whatever I have is also my husband's and he believes the same. I have to convert and look at the culture and myself as a strong cultural black woman I would say no way, he is not even supposed to get a cent, He must go and work, I won't even give him a cent out of my earnings.

Q: And then the autonomy/marital satisfaction, do you see them related to power issues?

A: Yes in some instances and no in others. When you have to be satisfied in marriage it depends on men. For example it is generally not expected for a woman to initiate sex, and this can be due to the believe by women that since men are powerful and have control, they should automatically initiate sex, tell where the family is going, what needs to be brought or bought into the family and this also depends on how marriage is setup. If your husband gives you an opportunity to decide on certain things (or give you some power), then he shift/shares power. If

however that man sees himself as the sole person in power then it means that power will always lie in him and you will not have anything to contribute or say as a wife. So really power relations are related to how we define autonomy. If your husband stamps his foot and tells you that culturally as a man he must decide on things, he is then using the power granted by culture. If he approaches you and share the power then he is acknowledging that you can also decide on issues rather than him imposing his cultural background on you.

Q: But then if he gives you permission to join him in deciding, is he not giving you permission to be autonomous, is the autonomy then not spontaneous, 'cause I don't think the autonomy is spontaneous but he is giving you permission to be autonomous?

A: He is but it also depends on how he introduces it. If he invites you to jointly decide it is better than when he has already made a decision and he just wants you to feel like you are participating, this says that he is accommodating you and he is giving permission. Being autonomous or rather saying you've got the right to choose as a wife in a marriage, I would say it depends on the conduct of you partner, because sometimes you can say you've got the right to choose be very strong, very strong feminist woman with strong cultural background can still decide to do things her own way despite the husband's consent. In that manner you are definitely going to fight as husband and wife and there will not be peace in the family. Then it says either of you needs to compromise. Maybe your husband may say my wife is very domineering, let me suppress or rather hold back my view/opinion and let her decisions prevail. He can decide to do that but might not be happy but just giving you what you want and make you feel like you have a right.

The thing is when you have a right to choose, that right needs to be enjoyed, you should not just be given an opportunity to exercise that right while the other person is not happy. It's like the other person is forced to give you the right but in essence he wouldn't have preferred to give you the right to do that but he has just been forced to give you that. It really depends on how the man conducts himself, he can freely give you the right and make you fell it and I am talking about liberated men. In certain instances my husband has given me the right to do certain things and I feel I am enjoying that right and I am enjoying it. I don't feel that he has compromised the situation to give me that right.

Q: So what you are saying is that people need to strike a balance between cultural issues and the status as being a professional woman. How do you see yourself rather as a professional woman, how would you want to behave as a professional woman in the context of marriage?

A: At the moment I am happy with how I am conducting my marriage. Saying I'm quite happy I would say the spiritual background has really lessoned so many things

for me. If it was not for the spiritual background, I would be saying something else, and if it was not only of my husband also being a staunched Christian, I will be saying something else. I have also found that interacting with other couples and getting to know how they behave around issues also helped to change our stance of some issues, when other men also their wives he's also allow his wife.

Q: Basically what you are saying is that when you come home your professional background is left outside and you behave according to what society expects of you from the cultural perspective and also what religion expects of you as a woman.

A: When I come home there was not even one day where I felt I am a professional, I had never felt like I am bringing my office here, its like that part does not even exist.

Q: But in terms of your independence as a professional one of the characters is being independent, being extremely autonomous, being extremely decisive and when you come home; that needs to be bended slightly to accommodate the already preconceived ideas about how a woman should behave.

A: I have not seen myself switching off from what I'd be when I am in my office, when I am alone, when I am looking at myself as that independent woman, switching off when I come into the marriage environment. Instead what I have seen happening is I just come as I am. I feel when I come into my marriage, I don't have to prove a point to my husband that I am that woman which every man would want to have, that woman who is submissive, that woman who would do everything you want her to do, I just become myself.

When I am in my office I become this very independent woman, so even when I come into my family, I just come and be independent and my husband will tell me what he is happy with and what he is not happy with. Unfortunately it's not like he is happy with everything, so of the things he may not be happy and tough luck he'll say to me this is how you choose to do things but you must be aware that this is not how I would do things. That being the case on his side I don't have a problem I am more often really relaxed rather than finding myself giving into the situation and the good thing is he never reminds me that I am this independent woman. Sometimes he even reminds me what he thinks I am like, or you are this professional woman, you are independent and he mentions it in an appreciating manner and for me is like he is reminding me. I am not coming into my family and clocking myself with that background, that I am this independent woman. The good thing is I am also very liberate woman and even when we were in the relationship for the first time I made sure that my husband understand that I am a very free person. What he sees actually is what he is going to get, there is nothing to hide, he'll just get what he is seeing, just me and that's it. If he can not relate with this character we always agree that in our marriage there are certain things we agree to differ, i.e. we are differing on them and we agree that we differ and that does not say we should fight. We go to

bed we are happy but we know that on that particular issue we just do not agree. That on its own helps me to enjoy my right to freedom of choice, or rather autonomy. So I would say in that manner that has been exercised. Sometimes I even ignore that fact that he is not happy about certain things which I am happy with, 'because sometimes you even end-up becoming selfish and saying what matters is about how I feel. If I don't take care of my own feelings then no one will and at that moment he realizes that I am becoming selfish I realize that's the time he starts opening up his eyes and trying to do something that will make me happy. And I have seen him do that a number of times cause I am one person if my husband does not do things that I reasonably think I am entitled to I've got the right to I just go ahead and I do them. You find that he is not happy and at times he will back me up on what I believe in, and he supports me but also affirms what he believes in.

Q: So the practice of autonomy in your opinion in marriages should be both individual autonomy and autonomy as agreed by the couple.

A: Yes definitely but the other partner should acknowledge the other's autonomy.

Q: Also what you said is understanding that you can not always agree and appreciating and respecting each other's opinion, results in satisfaction?

A: Aha, that results in satisfaction even if you may not agree with me, you may fight about it, you don't agree but you should still respect the fact that I am different. Remember when you get married you are not getting married to someone who is your character; you may want to be equal. Yes we say equality in a marriage; it is there but is also not there because these are two different people. We can say equality in terms of washing dishes, cooking or domestic chores. But when we look at characters that are what matters most on how you take your partner. Do you respect your partner to the level where she wants to be respected? That on its own says you are acknowledging your partner's character and you are able to achieve that equality in terms of acknowledging and respecting your partner's character without suppressing that character or rather discrimination against it in am a marriage environment. I think really mainly it has to do with character, acknowledge and respecting each others' character, opinions and views despite whether you agree or not, but respect them. That brings marital satisfaction for us to say there is marital satisfaction it's not easy because there can be marital satisfaction on certain things and on others they may not be.

On issues when you know the head of the family wants to do things in a certain way, you can strongly say this is not going to happen and assume your own role as a woman in the family, since he acknowledges you as the neck, you can say this in not going to happen and I have done that several times. He would feel disempowered and then comes out strongly to say that is not negotiable, things are going to be done this way. I would just strongly say to him it is not going to happen.

Q: So autonomy then is a question of being able to assert yourself when the next person feels that you don't have to act autonomous?

A: Especially when that person is fighting it, and you strongly feel that person is being unreasonable, I realize I was able to achieve doing what I wasn't and being autonomous and also have the satisfaction that I've always longed for in a particular thing. On certain things you will agree and on others not, on certain things you'll have satisfaction and on others not.

Q: And how does one strike a balance, I think that is a very important thing you have mentioned that you can have but you can also not have. How do you strike a balance, how would you define your ultimate satisfaction?

A: When I strike a balance it also depends on a particular situation, sometimes it's not easy to strike a balance, it's a win and loose situation and unfortunately I might end up a looser and I would be able to accommodate that loss. At the end you may not have all that you want, throughout but sometimes you may not have what you want but when you go to your social circles it helps you reconcile your position.

My satisfaction derives from that fact that when we got married there is nothing like that is yours and this is mine, we spoke & drew basic principles like you can not do without the other because even when we disagree you know you still need this person, you know this is my partner despite that disagreements. Despite how much I hate certain things about him, that does not mean I want to see myself divorced from the family.

Q:

So even if you are a professional, there are principles that guide behaviour in the relationship.
?

A: Even when you fight you still love one another, the bottom line is setting certain things up for yourself, for example you are not only in marriage for your sake only but also are representing certain people whom you may not be able to identify as their role models especially in church we are representing the broader church community which looks up at you. If we do anything ridiculous a number of people will fall because of us, and that takes us back to say in our marriage, we represent the throne of God rather than ourselves. Our spiritual background helps us to achieve full satisfaction, in our marriage.
Q: So basically you are acknowledging that her are challenges for professionals in dual career marriages. Do you then see a future for dual career marriages?

A: There is actually a grate future and that is manifest through in our marriage, I see a future in my marriage. Through the problems we had, I felt tempted at some point to deviate from the principles we set, but we were not able to do that.

Q: In terms of society is there a future in you opinion?

A: I think it will depend on the base at which people's marriages are on. Our marriage is on a spiritual base, I am seeing future in it. However not everyone is a Christian, and if those people's future is based on morals, values and their principles guidelines can be based on things like ethics, values and morals. For example, marriage is a fundamental institution in society, we are in this and we are going to stay in this forever and that can help people to survive. And I can say there is definitely a future depending on the base or foundation on what every marriage lie. If marriage does not have any foundation that it lies on or hold it, if a marriage does not have a foundation to help it stand, I am afraid it is likely to disintegrate anyhow because people will not be using any values or principles to make that marriage stand or survive. It would be a matter of I am independent, professional and I can live without you, or I wanted children now I have them you can now go. If you have really values it can still be cultural values because in terms of culture there is nothing like divorce (it is only through the changes in society the civilization that people divorce). In terms of Black culture that corner stone sit her is no divorce you stay in a marriage "lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi", its like you are there and you are there forever. If people can hold on to their cultural values, then many marriages will survive. Then culture becomes the base and foundation of the marriage. It all depends on the base of your marriage, but above al I would insist on respect. Respect each other in a marriage; everyone has dignity in a marriage, respect a woman's view, respect a woman's decisions in marriage for her to also feel satisfied in marriage. In that manner you will have a happy woman and the marriage will survive.

Gertrude transcript

Q: As a black professional married woman, what is your understanding of autonomy or your perception of autonomy in marriage and how does your perception influence your overall perception of marital satisfaction?

A: I believe as far as autonomy is concerned, before I got married as a person, I am as autonomous as one can define the word autonomy, but marriage for me is a totally different institution in the sense that I ascribe to traditional or cultural principles, meaning that I don't take the constitution home. I understand that my husband is the head of the family meaning that we are partners in the running of the household and the business of the house, but then most of the time he has the ultimate say. There are times when we have to compromise and in such instances I become a lawyer because I know how to facilitate win-win solutions. But if it means keeping the peace at home because of my personality I find that I get to compromise and I am happy to compromise, I don't mind at all.

Q: Then what is your basis, how would you generally define autonomy?

A: We can still categorize it. Professionally being autonomous means being able to dependent on your self hence the word being independent, and when I say being able to depend on your self I mean you look at what your role entails as far as the profession is concerned. For example as a lawyer, working on the ER department, I know that all the business of the ER depends on me. That does not mean that I don't rely on other people, its important for me to rely on others so that I can fulfill my role. I delegate a lot where is possible but I understand that even with delegation I am the person who is ultimately for everything that occurs.

Q: So as a professional you are more in charge, you are more independent?

A: Yes, I actually ascribe to that principle, cause it is the only one that works.

Q: You also said that you ascribe to the traditional or cultural value system, how do you then strike a balance, cause at work you are expected to be independent

A: I know my male very well I have males I interact with at work, I have a male at home, so when I am at work I become the lawyer, I know that there might be people whom I have to exercise my authority on because of my work, and the gender part does not come as in for me it is business. I just had a meeting with three males who had a problem, and I had to come across strongly to this man and give an order and if he deviates from that instruction then he can be charged. In such situations I don't know what goes in the minds of men but you find that there can be a bit of undermining. I don't pretend to be a man and I also don't want to be seen as if I am trying to be like them. Sometimes I am soft-spoken, at times I am able to speak hard but to put a point across I'll emphasise and even repeat myself and I don't mix the

words when it comes to such situations. In the boardroom you'll find that inherently there is undermining and I have experienced that. You can say something that makes business sense but because you are a female, your male counterpart will be heard more than you.

Q: I understand that at work you are free to be independent you don't have to be on guard because your work demands from you to behave in that way. But at the end of the day you go home, how then do you behave in the family setup.

A: At home I am a completely different person, I am also influenced by tradition, by culture and perhaps I am also a product of the environment within which I was raised. I observed how my mother conducted her business in her house even though she sent me to law school. I knew that my father was the head of the family and whether you knew the law or not, his word was the' word, and my mother said very little about their household business is run. For instances I knew that if there was something I wanted to do, like going out, I would go and ask my mom but at the end she'll say my father would have to approve and I knew that he is not going to agree so I would not even going and just leave it at that. That practice I was able to proudly take into my marriage life. I know that even though we both professionals we know our levels in terms of professions, we don't even compete, we know where our places are professionally.

Q: Would you please elaborate on that, 'cause that seems interesting that he is also educated and he understands that you can compete him at any intellectual level, but when you get home. How do you distinguish between both of you being professionals and you being husband and wife?

A: There is serious struggle of power, but for me it is not a struggle as such because I indicated that I subscribe to the traditional cultural role philosophy of a woman because that is how I have been taught, and I don't have a problem with getting out of my professional self when I am at home to fulfill that role. I understand that there'll be instances where we would engage professionally at home while I am busy with my domestic chores, and by domestic chores I mean that it is expected of me to prepare supper for the family, help the kids with home work and then prepare for sleeping if it has to be prepared. You find that I point that I get overworked because of I also come from a very demanding work area and then I come home to continue with housework as if I was not at work the whole day, it is just continuation and you are expected to immediately get energized because here are kids (3) who needs to be assisted with homework, then my husband expects me to prepare food for them, it is unfortunate that he will be sitting on the couch reading his newspaper, I don't read a lot of news paper as a result, because I don't get time at all. Kids are also conditioned in a particular way, they don't readily approach him for homework but would rather come to me and as I am cooking I would do it. I don't mind at all but I will be so exhausted.

Q: So what you are saying is that you have embraced the teachings from culture and you are comfortable despite the fact that you are a professional? Am I making sense?

A: Mmm, you are but I will be lying if I say I am comfortable. I have embraced them but I would not say it is totally comfortable, it is not. For me there is the ideal and there is also reality. The ideal would be partnering, we do partner but there are certain things he will say to me I don't do them for peace sake most of the time. Partnering would mean that we share chores 50/50, it will be ideal if I wash dishes and he dries, now he told me that he doesn't do dishes. Now we are getting a dishwasher because I also don't appreciate doing dishes, I did it as a girl, I've done it as an adult and I am still doing it now and I just don't appreciate it. I would also appreciate if he were also to assist me with the preparation of supper like in a very nice way, not because it is a chore but it comes natural to him that he has to assist me. For instance if I am doing pap, he can be busy with the other pot, or he can contribute by saying instead of cooking, let's go out. That is the ideal for me or alternatively, if I am busy in the kitchen then he must make sure that he carries on with homework and with the kids so that I don't become boggled down with such issues

Q: Do you as a professional have a choice, for argument sake, to say that I am not cooking tonight let's go out? Are you allowed to be that autonomous or would he just say, not I feel like pap and Inkomasi

A: O yes, it is not a question of allowing me. Remember I said I have ownership over the processes, I decide to cook. When I feel tired and if I have the money I just go and buy food I don't consult with anyone. My take is that come 20H00 there has to be food on the table, whether it is home made food or take-away, but I also strike balance. I know that takeaways are not necessarily healthy for them and even for me, so you find that I don't do it all the time, but when I am seriously tired and I can afford, I simply go to the restaurant and I buy. He is fortunately also not passive he receives what is on the table.

Q: The other thing that I am picking up is that for the relationship to work, or for you to feel satisfied in a marriage there seem to be a lot of respect, with you respecting the cultural values set and him respecting you as an independent woman and there isn't a time when there are clashes, power issues that might result in dissatisfaction.

A: I don't think so because this comes with benefits, he knows that I earn a salary and for the standard of life we are at he knows that it means money, so he will not on his salary afford to keep us where we are alone, so he understands that I have to be professionally based to sustain our standard of living and I also have to fulfill those roles that are set to be traditional female roles.

Q: Do you ever feel at times that you can't be as autonomous as you would love to be in your marriage?

A: You have to give examples because of my personality I end up running most of the business in the house, for instance, yesterday the municipality bill came, it is addressed to both of us but I was the first one to open it and I immediately put it in my diary. It means I have to see to the payment, eh, I think also because of the companies we work for, I have leeway to make sure that all this payments are done. He works late, I don't know if he ever considered visiting the municipality I often do transactions in the office. I am actually more comfortable because of my personality to do all that 'cause I don't want surprises' I don't want to see the electricity cut because somebody forgot

Q: A lot of young people are aspiring to be professionals and basically it means that there is a high possibility that a lot of new marriages will be dual career marriages. You seem to have embraced the traditional and it works fine because there are no power struggles, there is understanding, there is respect for both of you, but do you then see a future for dual career marriages in the country?

A: Mmm!! Eh, yes I do, mainly for economic reasons, but that does not mean that marriages cannot sustain themselves if only one partner works. Like for instances I don't have issues, if he had to stop working and I am able to carry all of them I would not have a problem with that and I will expect him to also do the same thing. Secondly, when you get married, you don't only get married according to us to your husband it's the family as well. There are things I don't do which will shock you because people have preconceived ideas about professional women. For instance, I don't argue with my mother in law, I don't answer back, that's how I was taught at home. I'd know that this woman is wrong now she is really pushing it, I'd smile she would not even hear it from me, if it is really burning me and I have to complain, eh, being the lawyer that I am, I'd find the way of linking somebody else whom I'd have to ask what is happening or whom I'd have to then carry or make use as a vessel to carry the message through and hope to God that the message gets through to her that I did not appreciate that. Seriously I really don't answer back, she'd be wrong I'll just smile (Researcher: I am actually shocked), I'd just say mmm. Its my father who taught that (now I know it can never be right) us old people are never wrong, we were taught that you don't answer back. You'll have your own opinion but that's your business, it's not his at all. So I am fortunate that I was and I am still able to carry that through.

Q: And that doesn't bother you because it is something innate in you, I guess, you wouldn't wanna say no you know I have my right you cant say that to me?

A: Ah, I'd just say its one of those things "ke motho o mogolo". I remember the first time we met my father in law's cousin was visiting and he was asking where is Ga-

Rankuwa and out of no where, I said Ga-Rankuwa is 30 km outside Pretoria, and then they said oh oh, what did you just say. They expected me to say it in Sotho, to give a detailed description in Sotho and how do get there in terms of driving and hours.

Q: And how would you define that behaviour, was it your professional talking at that point or was it just you, your personality?

A; No it wasn't my personality, it was the profession because I still remember, I think it was court practice, I even had my hand at the back as if I am in court, like now I have to answer. I think it comes with the territory that this are people with whom you have to behave in a particular when you are with, especially during the first few months of your marriage.

Q: Do you find yourself feeling guilty for making "extremely independent" (if I may classify) decisions in your marriage? Do you come back to say but I wasn't supposed to do that 'cause culturally I am not expected to?

A: Mmm, sometimes but not necessarily. There are things maybe without thinking I'd do because I feel they are necessities, just for the sanity in the house. Ehh, I also believe to a certain extent, even though that believe might be classified as (I don't want to use the word discriminatory), stereotypes, that when you make a decision you make it because it's gonna work for you but there are times when you have to consult for the sake of consulting. In such instances if it is for the sake of consulting, yes consult, but does it work for you. Culture will dictate that yes you have to consult Like buying a dishwasher, I'd buy it whether he agrees or not, not necessarily for me, I believe for all of us because this is what we do, but sometimes you find that it doesn't really benefit anybody. It was something that you have to do anyway. (I hope I answered you)

Q: I think you did to a great extent, the reason I asked that question is throughout the interviews and also throughout the literature search, I have grown to learn and to understand that as a person, you are an individual and sometimes you need to make individual decisions, but at the same time you leave within the collective, you leave within other people and in the marriage you are partners with your husband and if you are running your family as a business while you can make independent decisions, you should also make collective decisions with your partner

A: Yes I agree, hence I said it depends on what you are talking about. I think if we classify them into minor issues and major issues, the degree of autonomy will have to be defined. I mean there are decisions which are so big that they'll want to make you whistle, and those kind of decisions you cant take on your own and there are those which are minor, for instance, if a child is sick, I'll have to rush her to the hospital, I am not going to call him and ask for permission, or ask what should I do.

I'll do what is best under the circumstances at the point in time. I like being in control not domineering but to know that things will be right at the end of it all and that it doesn't have to depend on him or on me that if it has to be on the table, I wont say I did not have money or he walks in and I didn't have money, I'd plan ahead. But then often, there is a misunderstanding between people being referred to as super-women and super-people, I think I am a super person, because I want to know that I am OK, I'll be OK, I have to be OK. That is why you find that I am in all this places, but I don't prophes to be a superwoman, no ways, I need assistance somewhere.

Q: and how would you just summarise the relationship between autonomy, marital satisfaction and professionalism?

A: Definitely there is that inter relatedness, there are links, we saying there is the profession, there is the marriage and then there is autonomy. I believe autonomy is the self, you have to be yourself before you become a professional and before you become a partner. Otherwise if you don't do that you'll be miserable your whole life. It has to start with you so that issues of esteem or self-esteem as they call it don't necessarily interfere in the marriage and also in your profession. For example, with the negotiations last year there were times when we would finish around 21H00. I would want to finish at 21H00, that fulfills my professional being, then I go home and if he says I want to have my pap with veggies, I'd do that gladly, because I don't have issues, he is not abusing me, he is not pinning me down to anything, I enjoy doing that for him, whether it's 12H00 or 21H00, I'd do it gladly. For me it's not about esteem at all, it's not about power. The same principle you also use in your profession. I mean there will be men who will come in and if I have to give them tea I'd give them tea, that doesn't define who I am, it doesn't mean that I am the maid, I am not. So like I say, autonomy starts within, we have to know who you are so that you can be able to give your best to the profession and to the home. Otherwise if you can't you are in trouble.

Researcher: OK thank you.
Interviewee: I really enjoyed this.

Mapule' transcript:

Q: As a black professional woman, what is your understanding of autonomy and how does your understanding influence your overall perception of marital satisfaction?

Autonomy for me is the freedom to do what I want to do. I think as women we need freedom to do whatever we want to do and in marriage you don't find that, you realise that there are certain things that has to be done in a certain way in order to satisfy the other person. In my case I have struggled because I have realised that despite me wanting to get things done in my way I would always have to get permission and get a buy in from the other person. I find that in marriage I am limited you can't grow you end up being stuck because you don't necessarily get the support you require from your husband.

What do you mean by being limited?

The limitation is not being able to do things the way you would want to. I found myself having to compromise to satisfy his needs and request. It is more forgetting yourself and compromising yourself for the others. In my situation I have also found that I got to compromise because of fear of being criticised. In our culture in black families we are taught that it is family first and the rest later, that rest basically meaning you come secondary to the needs of the family.

What I hear you say is that you haven't experienced the freedom cause you are saying autonomy for you is the freedom to do what you want to do, so in marriage you have found your autonomy to be limited?

Yes in marriage my autonomy is very very limited.

How do your respond to that limitation?

I have to force my way at times and try and convince my husband of my needs and clearly selling that I am not necessary neglecting or disrespecting his needs as a husband but I just want to do my own things. This is not easy because you are forced by culture and religion to behave in submissive ways. But that does not complete you as a person. I belief as a person you have to be happy in all areas of your life, being it at home, at work as an individual you need that complete happiness and satisfaction. In the marriage I find that that satisfaction is not always there because you have to always compromise yourself.

If for example I need to start my own business and my husband is not believing in that idea I find that he would not be supportive of my initiatives and he would try to convince me not to do that which I would enjoy and he would sort of impose his way into what he thinks will work.

I find that in marriage you are limited, you have this African husbands who are the head of the family and you are treated like a baby where you need to listen to what he says and support him continuously even if he does not always supportive of you.

What you are also saying is that your identity as married woman is that of your husband?

Everything you do, all your achievement are seen as a result of your husbands'. For example if you buy yourself your beautiful car people would congratulate your husband even if you had bought the car yourself. He would always get the compliments and in the eyes of society they would not even say no it is actually my wife's car and she bought if herself, rather they would accept the compliments.

Do you see a future of dual career marriages?

I see a future for the upcoming generation, cause I think people are more empowered now, there is a lot of information to help the upcoming couples to cope. There is now a move towards not being submissive to it is about your whole being and people now are realising that satisfaction is a complete sense of being in all areas of ones' life. I think we have paved a way for them and the way forward is better. We are now raising our kids to do everything despite their gender. In doing so I think we are paving a new and different generation for our children and if they carry this new practice I believe they would cope better in their dual career marriages.

You referred to a sense of wholeness and how does that link to autonomy?

For me being a complete being means satisfying your spiritual needs your physical needs and if I can link it to autonomy is means being able to be autonomous in all areas of your being. For me wholeness is being able to identify a sense of autonomy in the different context. You have to be the pillar to your husband, you know that as a mother you have to take care of the kids your have to be the organiser. You need to be able to plan your life at home just as you are able to plan and organise your life at work. You need to make sure that your things run smoothly.

But how do you do that at home if you don't have the autonomy to do as you please at home. You don't have that independence to plan as you would because that is denied.

You have to go and plan with your husband and say I think this is what needs to happen and get your husband to buy in. This shows that as people we can never be independent, you can never be fully autonomous. I believe that in any setup where there is more than one person you would never be autonomous. However it is not

like in the past. We get to select we are privileged and I think it is up to an individual. If you do not want to be submissive there is an alternative.

What you are saying is that your level of autonomy is a question of choice.

It is and you can be submissive to a certain level when you feel that it is enough you can't do it anymore then you have a right to say no, I cant take this anymore. There are instances where you need to place limits and not cross the line if my husband is going over board in terms of his expectations, then I would not allow that to happen because that is clearly been taken for granted.

Are you saying autonomy is linked to respect of the individual?

Yes I think if a husband respects me as an individual and respect that I can be independent in my own ways, then come to a compromise as opposed to me constantly submissive and compromising my position when my husband is not doing anything. Again our satisfaction in marriage is a result of our different needs. Some people are in marriages because of their religion both being strongly religious, others it is about entertainment or whatever will bring you together. If for an example as religious couple your husband decides he no longer goes to church and if this brought you together you are likely not be happy and satisfied because you can no longer do what brought you together. Your satisfaction would be affected if your spiritual bond is broken down. You find that other people would be prepared to do anything the husband requires as long as they would have the spiritual bond and if the bond dismantles then the person becomes dissatisfied.

I think what you are saying makes sense, that people cope and derive satisfaction if their primary needs are fulfilled. If somebody values religion more than autonomy they would cope better because their primary need is to fulfil their duties as religious wives than striving to be autonomous.
Satisfaction for me is a result of what you value and what you hold on to in marriage. As people we derive our satisfaction in different ways and satisfaction would vary from one married woman to the other.

How do you see culture and religion contributing to marital satisfaction?

Religion makes you submissive you don't even have a choice whether you are right or wrong you just have to do. With culture you are taught and you could always select what is working for you and what wont work. With culture there is the debate on what works and what doesn't work, whereas with religion you are told and you are not supposed to question because the minute you question then you would be looked at differently.

Are you saying you can question culture, is it not imposed on us?

Yes. We are taught and therefore you can question it to a level where the person teaching you can come to your understanding. Due to the changes in situation, culture can also be changed to accommodate new ways of behaving. For example if we take the initiation practice in the past it was a given but now with hospitals doing the same thing (Circumcising) you have a choice of whether you take your child to initiation school or send to the hospital.

With religion it is rigid, things are in a particular manner and that can not be changed. Scriptures are used to emphasise what is said. Religion is not changing whereas culture gives you the opportunity to behave in accordance with the changes in society. You can not culturally expect things that were practiced 100 years back to still be implemented now. Yes there are certain issues that are still core and essential and they would still apply. If we are doing things differently now we also need to adapt to the new ways of doing things.

Toa's transcript:

Q: As a black professional woman, what is your understanding of autonomy and how does your understanding influence your overall perception of marital satisfaction. How do you see autonomy in your marriage, and how would you define autonomy?

That is quite a complicated question, ah for me as a black woman there is a difference in roles or paradigm shift between my role and responsibilities at work and my role and responsibilities at home. And I also mentally prepare myself as I am going home that leave the very assertive very Toa the manager at work because now it is Toa the wife and the dynamics are very different. So there is always a complex between my autonomy as an individual and being a wife as well as being a working professional.

So what you are you saying your level of autonomy as a wife, as an independent woman and as a professional varies?

It varies and ah, my husband and I used to have this conversations where he says done bring the manager home. So I have to make a conscious effort to change my language, change my posture change everything which on itself is stressful, because like I say it requires a complete mind shift. The whole mind shift thing is also depends on the husbands view on women professionals in general and what his experience has been personally with women professionals in his own family. Now my husband's mother was a house wife and his father sisters where not professional women, his mother married very young at 16 and she never had a professional life even after she divorced my father in law. After 25 years of marriage she left without a skill having stopped her education at 16, so the kind of dynamic that he was exposed to just in terms of a women professional was in my view very skewed, cause what he saw in the home and his broader extended family was that the men was the one who studies to become a professional and by right that gives him certain rights in the home, certain level of authority and that a women doesn't have. He fortunately or unfortunately married into a family where there are lots of professional women, women who are very assertive, very opinionated but I don't use it in a negative context, women who are doing well in their chosen careers and I was fortunate that I had a professional mother who also understood the value of an education who understood the value of a woman being able to stand on her own and derive satisfaction from her personal achievement. You know not to take anything away from a person who decides to be a house wife but I always make the point that when children are growing up families make no distinction between boys and girls in the education that the children are exposed to. So when your son is of school going you send them to school and you should do the same for the girl. They enjoy the same curriculum. For me there is a seeming contradiction that as a man you are prepared to pour out and invest towards your girl's child education but when she is now independent meets somebody and get married all of a sudden she is not

allowed to show off or enjoy her achievement or openly take pride in her achievements because that would be seen as your challenging your husband or you are trying to make your husband look small.

And my particular situation is taken even a step further when he decided to go to bible school some two years ago. That situation produced a very interesting dynamic and I find that having to constantly affirm his position as a husband and do things that I know if the roles were reversed he would not be doing. For instance I would be at work the whole day, pick up my child from school and when I get home I would still have to cook, regardless of whether he has been at home. I would still have to clean the house and see to all the things that are traditionally associated with a woman's responsibility and if I complain and indicate that I am tired the conversation would inevitably lead to what is your role as a woman. The challenge there is to bite my tongue and not even say to him but what are your responsibilities as a husband because I should not have to be providing for you in this sense.

There is generally unfairness because you are compromising but you found him not being prepared to compromise regardless of your situation then.

Yes, I remember once we had an argument because I got home after work very tired, I knew in my mind that I still had to still have to cook supper, it was a stressful day at work, and you walk in and you see there are still breakfast dishes from the morning, nothing has been tidied nothing has been clear and you say it would help if you could have assisted and that escalated into an argument and he said am I your maid I have now come to a point where I have seen there is something in the male ego that even when you can see that there is role reversal where the woman is now the provider but in almost a refusal to acknowledge that in terms of how to balance the household chores. I would appreciate to get some assistance but there is that stubborn refusal to acknowledge it just in terms of changing the roles.

The situation you described earlier is quite interesting and I think it speaks directly to autonomy. How did that experience affect your overall autonomy at home?

I would not do anything without his consent because it would be read differently. It is the level of autonomy as a provider then decrease and not increased because since men are sensitive to perceptions even outside the home, especially since he is from a conservative family who did not approve of him not working at that point. The families also then expected him to be a provider and they were clearly expressing their dissatisfaction with him not working. There has been that level of sensitivity around that arrangement because it made him feel even more disempowered if I would just do things without involving him.

Why did you find yourself doing that?

I think I did that to respect the cultural context of the marriage. In our culture I know what a woman's role is whether I have taken that consciously or subconsciously there is a certain way I believe a woman should be in marriage. So I am quite happy my belief is that it was right that I behave that way because I must understand that a mans ego is very sensitive and I would not want to cause any unnecessary strive although the solution is not to my complete satisfaction I think I was better able to handle the situation, just in terms of giving up a lot of what I want to keep things alright with him.

How do you cope with the challenge of being a professional woman, independent at work, making decisions and going home assuming a subordinate role. What helps you cope?

I think in my case it is a combination of culture and religion. I think I am also fortunate like I said in my case I had the experience of having professional women in around me, my mother, my aunts. So I had the opportunity to see them in two different contexts. I will see how they were at the office, my mother was a go getter very assertive at work, and I will see how she behaved at home. And this made me realize that oh this is how it is, when she gets home she gets water for my father to wash his hands, she is serving him on a tray, she is doing things that my father could do for himself. My father would sit comfortably in his chair and ask my mother to get him something from the kitchen like getting him a glass of juice or water. So I think it is fortunate that I saw that because right or wrongly my mother and my aunts developed a coping mechanism or a way of dealing with these dual roles.

One thing that I am doing with my son is to teach him an appreciation and respect for women who are professional. So I am beginning to have conversation with him teaching him that it is important for both parties in a marriage to respect each other in terms of their career and professional lives. And you need to do all that you can to support that person. For instance if you get married and you wife is a professional, certain things that I am doing here at home like I get home I don't even have 5min to sit down cause I need to get supper going, you need to be able to say to your wife that OK my dear lets' do it together, or while she is at the stove you are helping with the kids, getting them clean helping with homework and doing laundry. I teach him that he needs to start changing your expectations of what you want from a wife because as much as I say I observed my mother boys also do observe their father and by observing their fathers they develop certain expectations from their wives when they are now adults and going into marriage. So I am trying very hard to have those conversations with my son to say to him change your expectations of how a wife should behave once you are married. Be very sensitive to their family context or background because you mind find that your wife's family might freak-out if they came to your house and they find you ironing, so you need to decide between the two of you that when your family is here you don't need to do that. You need to find a system in the home which will work for both of you. I think if we can do that,

especially with the boys, to empower the boys. Women are empowered and more so professional women are empowered so I think the final hurdle, or stumbling block is teaching men about what an empowered woman needs, what a professional woman needs because it does not matter how empowered I am I can rise to become Chief Executive of a Company but if the context within which my husband or the men in my family view me as a professional woman does not change I will never be fully empowered. So I very strongly believe that girls can become whatever they want to become but it is about teaching the boys now that this is what an empowered woman requires.

It is interesting that you are saying that because in my opinion we are currently living an illusion of dual career marriages in the South African context and I don't think it is only in South Africa I think it is world wide, it is an illusion there is nothing like that.
It is only a small percentage of people who are collaborating and saying I am cooking to do that, the rest of us really we go home and do the rest. I have always said our children are likely to live a dual career marriage provided we empower them, provided we start teach them how to behave with their wives and husbands in such marital context because as is, my experience and what I hear is that we are living an illusion. We are still bound by cultural ways of doing things. A lot of women I had spoken to have said based on culture I have observed my mother, based on culture I have done that. Other women have said Christianity says I should be subordinate and as a result I am behaving as such, not that I am completely satisfied with the situation but the broader social context forces me to behave in that way and it is either I behave in that so that I am accepted or I don't behave in that way then I am rejected I become an outcast in society. I don't know how you see it but I believe the future of dual career marriages depends on how we groom children who are born out of the current dual career marriages.

I think it is critical. I think we need to grow our child differently. I am fortunate that I am a mother of a boy and I am quite hard on my son on teaching him what is acceptable and not acceptable behavior. How do you relate to people, the fact that even as a boy or a man you should not carry yourself with a sense of entitlement because everyone brings something onto the table and as long as you acknowledge what the person brings on the table then you sort of create an environment for a harmonious relationship where each party is equally satisfied, but like you are saying it is true we are living an illusion. Our careers have given us an avenue to show off our talents, our creativity where we can dream our dreams but we are not dreaming our dreams wholly. We are not able to express who you fully are at home, you are not celebrated for your achievement and I find even with my male relatives that a woman's success is almost spoken of in a dismissive or negative way. It will be like you have been promoted congratulations, there is always eh something negative attached to it. Until we can be celebrated at home, where your husband is comfortable to boast to people about your achievements and say I have married an extraordinary woman, I don't think they are there yet. And I don't think we are also at

a point where we can push the envelope just in terms of demanding recognition in the home.

How does all this speak to your marital satisfaction?

I think for me personally and a lot of other married women that I know, it is one area where there is a great deal of dissatisfaction because you feel you are not being celebrated as an individual, Toa the person, not Toa the wife, or Toa the mother. So it is a very strange thing because you come from gaining independence from your parents, establishing yourself in your own right as a person to almost becoming invisible again where you are identified by your husband, everything is still in the context of being somebody's wife, when what you really want to do is to be celebrated as an individual, as a person with own dreams own achievement and very separate from your identity as a wife.

Earlier you said you are content with the cultural expectation but what I hear you saying now is that does not make you fully satisfied as with the status quo.

Yes it doesn't but yet again we can never be fully satisfied. I am content in that I told myself that I get recognition as a professional from work and if I can gain that respect and recognition of the people I work with then I am satisfied with that. It really will be an icing and cherry on the cake to get that from my husband, to get it at home. But if I cant it is sort of a reality check that I am not going to get that anytime soon. At least I am satisfied that within the context of my work environment I am valued.

But then if you look at it also within dual role responsibilities you do get that recognition at home based on how you present yourself. If you present yourself in the way you are expected to you will get that recognition but the minute you come in and behave as Toa the manager you will not get the respect. I think you are forced to behave in a certain way for you to be accepted and accommodated and given that level of respect at home, whereas at work you can't come to work and be submissive you won't get that respect as a professional woman. I think the level of respect as a woman is also context bound.

I am quite satisfied with myself as a wife, daughter in life in that context and I try to do the best I can because I understand that coming form the background that he does it would cause a lot of family friction if I just decide to be this professional person at home. I have seen it as my cousin and his wife, who was behaving as a successful professional in her marriage and it just is not working. The thing that a man wants from his life partner is somebody to pamper him, somebody to look after his family. In the context of the marriage it boils down to what your husband wants. It is clear that we need to adapt your behaviour to suit your marriage context. As I say I am fortunate to have observed how my mother and aunts behaved in their marriages, juggling their behavior between professional women and being wives.

Being a professional woman does not mean I don't want a home, I don't want a family and I derive a great deal of satisfaction from being a good wife. When I look at it on balance I am quite happy to play that dual role or to adapt from one environment to the other because if we want to be professionals at home we are just pushing it. It creates all kinds of problems, when my husband volunteers to help I show my appreciation but I never have expectations that he will do that everyday. What I am hoping is that he will learn to become more considerate, if he can see that my wife is tired and don't cook and show an appreciation for me as a person and not say we are getting take out because she is a professional she does not cook rather than really acknowledging that we are getting take out because I am tired.

Tebogo's transcript:

Q: As a black professional woman, what is your understanding of autonomy and how does your understanding influence your overall perception of marital satisfaction?

When I got married I wanted to take charge of my finances. You understand that marriage is about compromising, communication and taking into account the next person in the decisions you make. My professional status does not affect my satisfaction in marriage. However there are certain instances where I would decide to buy something for example a bicycle for my child because I can afford it I would feel it is not necessary to discuss it with my husband. However at times such decisions are sensitive regardless; not because you have not discussed. Other issues of certain amount need to be discussed. I have learned as a result that in marriage you need to discuss issues and jointly decide what action needs to be taken and how such action would be taken and by whom.

Autonomy does not have a negative impact because decisions we make are collectively made as a couple. For example while I am studying there are times where I would need to have group discussions or study late. These issues were discussed with my husband so as a result I don't feel that he denies me the independence to do such things at times. However at times it upsets him because he would feel he is not accommodated. He can be supportive at times and I think it does not have a negative impact on my life as such.

How do you define autonomy?
Autonomy for me is the ability to make decisions on your own without worrying the other will feel not consulted – Based on what I am saying there is therefore no autonomy in marriage because if you just listened to me now (she laughs) most and almost all decisions at home are jointly made however small or big they may seem.

How do you relate autonomy within collective decision making?

As an individual you have an idea which you have to justify before the next party, you discuss your idea and he gives a counter idea or support your idea. Therefore you take an initiative and sell to the next person, which boils back to you not been fully autonomous in your decision making on your ideas but your decisions follow a negotiation or discussion with your husband.

How do you make a transition from being a Director where you are expected to lead and therefore take decisions for your business unit to being in an environment where your ideas have to run past your husband for approval?

Automatically there is an automatic transition or adjustment. I don't think the adjustment is a difficult one because it is not only at home even at work you consult.

There is that unconscious move you take. It is something you were told and I think it has to do with socialization where when you get married you are told that marriage is this and not that, you are told what you can do in marriage and what you cannot do. So all this expectations are laid on you at the very first day of your marriage. In addition to you being socialized I think in your marriage you grow to become friends such that you consult on small things. The relationship automatically results in you agreeing and consulting on everything.

As a Christian how does your Christianity impact on autonomy?

The bible does not mean we should not have ideas or view points and hence God gave us brains. Your husband needs to respect your viewpoint. For example my husband dos everything for himself, I for example do not have to take away his plate after he finishes food nor would he just lie there all the time and ask me for water for example. Christianity has not impacted negatively on my autonomy in marriage. I acknowledge my husband as the head of the family. In most cases I will suggest something and we both agree and decide on what needs to be done. However there are times when men decide on their own and as a Christian woman you withdraw because you are expected to respect your husband and acknowledge him as head.

For me decisions are more about communicating and negotiating. What is important is that I am treated with respect and that my husband is not using his power to impose ideas on me. Decisions should not be imposed. As a professional I know how to draw the line at home. However at times it happens that you will behave like a professional at times and you are adamant but it is very minimal. The first two years of marriage are tough, you learn that it is no longer about me but us, it is no longer mine but ours.

When I look at culture I feel it oppresses women's autonomy. It expects you to act in a certain manner which is OK for its proponents. Culture limits autonomy in a very significant way, for example, decisions are made by others on issues that affect you, which could explain why a lot of women don't follow anything that culture dictates to them. At the same time once you deny or don't follow, you are being rebellious; you are treated as disrespectful to an extent of being victimized. Due to fear of being rejected a lot of educated women still to this, they would follow and not question some of the things imposed on them because they were taught and socialized into doing it and they firmly believe that they have to do that. All this behavior has to do with socialization. Education is not there for us to move from our beliefs, regardless of who you are. You are bound by culture to behave in a certain way. It is about how you are brought up, you still embrace culture, you don't want to be deculturalized. You don't want to be a victim of cultural imperialism.

As an educated person you have to look at things from different perspectives. You also have to look at things differently and weight that. As an educated woman you are empowered to make calculated and educated decisions.

Do you see a future for dual career marriages?

Unfortunately a lot of women are studying and they are perusing careers. The world is changing is such a way that women are getting educated and they are holding senior positions at work. At the same time marriage I thin is a natural something that is triggered by biology or socially when you are of a certain age and you are dating it is expected that you will marry. Yes much as more women are getting educated, we will also find that this educated people would get married and as a result there is a future for dual career marriages. In the past few weddings I have attended it was marriages of professionals and this is evident that despite the financial independence that our status as professionals gives we will still want to get married. The catch is how you both make it work because my experience has taught me that it is not easy it takes a lot of compromises for you to make it in marriage. Couples should not confuse their professional status with the expectations of a marital setup regardless of whether you want to view things from culture or religion.

Esther's transcript:

Q: As a professional woman, what is your understanding of autonomy and how does your understanding influence your overall perception of marital satisfaction?

A: I am not sure if I am going to put it in a right way, autonomy to me is a right; it is a birth right to both men and women. Well when it comes to marriage (especially in south Africa, since we are having the democracy here) I think it is going to work well if both parties understand that they have freedom towards whatever they are doing in marriage, and they come to an agreement that a woman can be independent not always making sure that she consults her husband in making some decisions. Remember we are working and at work I am able to take decisions to do some things. Well I think that should also work at home, not forgetting that we've been taught that we need to be submissive to our husbands. Now things have changed and as I indicated to you that autonomy means a right, I think I have some rights in a marriage that I can just work on without my husband saying anything and as a professional woman I think it will be easy for me. When we met I wanted that freedom between me and my husband. So I said to him we are both working, I don't want to know how much you earn and please don't ask me how much I earn for as long as when we come to projects in the house I'll ask you to contribute financially for us to both run the projects in the house. I don't know how much he is earning and I don't think he knows how much I earn unless he is inquisitive, like myself, I am inquisitive and I know how much he earns. We make sure that whatever we are doing, we call it a project in the house and this way freedom prevails and I think that is the reason we are still married today, because men can feel inferior if women earn more. I don't want him to know that I earn more than him, I just let him feel free as a husband, he'll bring whatever and I bring whatever and we call it projects so that is why we don't fight.

So what I am saying is that freedom is when you agree especially in marriage as partners that money, seniority or whatever can not come into your marriage. If you love each other no matter what I have as long as you will gain does not make you feel inferior to somebody. For example if I took a decision alone and when I explain it to him, I expect him to take as much as he would. He will decide to buy a car he'll just do it and he'll give me reasons why and I'll accept them and I respect his freedom. For me also when I bought a car I told him and he agreed. The freedom makes him feel that I am not after his money. You know African man do feel that women are after their money, so I want him to enjoy whatever is his. It doesn't matter whether he earns more or I earn more, what is left after the running of the household projects is mine, in that way I feel free. I am not a financial manager and I don't want him to be my financial manager..

Q: So you feel that in your marriage, you have the autonomy to do what you want to do anytime and as a result you feel you are satisfied in your marriage?

A: yes as long as I tell him.

Q: Did you have to fight for the freedom at some point in your marriage in the early stages of the marriage or was it just there. Did you agree and it just came naturally following your agreement?

A: Let me tell you reading helps a lot, and to me reading books has helped my relationship to work. I read a book where one woman indicated that for your marriage to work, you need to have freedom, there is no need for you to be bound by your husband, to keep on crying to your husband for him to help you achieve your needs or goals. If you want to buy coaches and they cost R20 000, and you have it as a woman, don't ever look at the other person, do it yourself. I personally do everything in the house he only pays the bond because I love beautiful things. For me not to create the fights I pay for whatever I like for the house

Q: So you have been more independent, more proactive and nobody is coming in your way?

A: Exactly. Coming to how the autonomy happened, I read a lot. Even before we got married when we were still at school, we did not have money, we did not even think we'll prosper this much, I just said to him, I love you the way you are and the love is not material love. He started working first and he did so many things and when I started working I suggested that each one of us enjoy their money and run household projects.

Q: What are your reasons you don't want him to know how much you are earning?

A: The reason is that I had to do things at home and I him seeing my salary would have influenced the change in our marriage. I knew that if I bring my pay slip he'll realize that we would afford more and as a result I would not be able to help out at home. Now I am relieved, I have done things I wanted to do for my mother and if he has to ask for the pay slip I wont have a problem, and I don't think he will feel bad. I think he is aware that I earn more

Q: and what do you do for him to feel that you are in a way better off that him (if I may put it that way)

A: Like I told you that every time there is something we need to do, he also needs to contribute so that he can have that pride of saying I also contributed in this. Always when I need a very expensive furniture in my house, I'll just say to him I am going to save for 3months, do you want to contribute and if says he cant, I'll just go ahead and do it. In my principle, I don't like people to feel inferior. As much as I love him, I don't want him to feel inferior and I won't show him how much I have saved much as

I don't want to know how much he has in his account. I also indicated that he's got freedom not to put me as a beneficiary in his policies because I am working

Q: So there is greater freedom in your marriage and everybody is happy

A: Yes, yes

Q: Normally, as a black person, culture expects women to be submissive and dependent on their husbands. At work you are a training officer, you are required to be independent, to go out there and initiate projects, to be in control, to have the power, so when you get home do you find yourself moving from the HR officer to this submissive traditional wife.

A: you know sometimes it becomes difficult because I tend to talk my mind and somewhere I feel I overpower him when we talk because he is not a talkative person. But if I have to emphasize a point and do that especially if I feel right. For me to always stay submissive even on things that I know they are right, no ways, I am not taking that and he knows that.

Q: So regardless of what culture expects if you feel that you need to express yourself, as long as it is in a respective way, you to that.

A: You have. You know men are like kids, if you don't say your point clearly he wont understand so you must make sure that you express that this thing I wont take. You must put it through

Q: Don't you ever feel guilty by asserting yourself, given the cultural expectations

A: Unfortunately if it happens I don't care cause I had to express myself. I do feel guilty that the words I used in our conversations were wrong. It's like when I am in male dominated work place where I am just a female senior person, obviously you'll feel threatened and you'll want to emphasise what you want to say, I did that in my marriage and he felt that I was being disrespectful. Unfortunately I have my own pride, I wont say I am sorry if I say anything wrong, if he stops talking to me, I will respect that and by the time he feels he is fine and he can start talking to me, he'll talk to me.

Q: I can tell there is greater understanding in your marriage and it is all because you have set principles and you had made agreement from the onset. As a result you are happy as a professional woman, but at the same time you are free to be independent. Is it based on cultural value, Christian values? Where does it come from. While some women express that they are submissive because religion or culture expects them to, I don't hear you saying you are submissive what you say is that you have a working relationship and it was defined.

A: Very interesting is that I do talk at church, I do tell women what to do. I know you have to be submissive in a religious way, but I don't think you always have to be submissive even if your husband is doing wrong. The bible says you need to respect your husband and your husband is like Jesus, but Jesus has never done wrong things to people and people decided to be submissive. He always did the right things so our husbands need to know that they are not Jesus and if they do wrong things, we need to call them to order as soon as possible, I do understand and I do respect the religious way, but in order for you to be heard as a woman in the house, you need to put your foot down. Yes you need to respect your husband but I also expect him to respect me. Submissiveness is not freedom, you can be happy in your marriage but as long as you don't take a decision there is a problem.

Q: Right now a lot of young newly married professional woman are experiencing problems in their marriages because of issues of autonomy and cultural issues such as you cannot do this whereas on the other hand I have the autonomy to do that. There is always that conflict/clash, do you see a future for young up-coming career women, do you see success in dual career marriages.

A: For as long as culture gets into their way. For a healthy marriage they must have principles that they have set from the beginning and they must leave on those principles and they will succeed. Like I said this days the youngster need to set some grounds for their marriages to be successful. If they don't and they take the culture and mix it with the modern things, really they won't survive, the husband will say this and this well educated woman will not take it. They won't even last a year in a marriage, so one must come down or they must both come at par and agree on something

Q: So because of the cultural clashes vs. the professional clashes, what you are saying is that the couple need to set principles that are working for them and they both have to agree for them to be satisfied in their marriages.

A: I do have friends some having one pool of account with the husband being the controller and there is not freedom and independence. She is always depended on the husband to tell him how much to spend. It is not fair because we are both working. I said to one of my friends that I did not appoint a financial manager I don't need one.

Q: My understanding of what you are saying is that a person can make individual choices but at times we need to make collective choices with your partner.

A: I can decide to buy whatever alone, but the things related to house projects, even if I am going to do them alone I need to inform my husband

Q: So basically one can not be fully autonomous in a marriage?

A: No according to my understanding you cannot. for the fact that you are in a marriage (you must remember that marriage is a contract) its like when you are employed I cannot just take a decision without informing my employer, even if I can do it on my own. So it works like that, there needs to be consultation and agreement.

Q: So wouldn't you then see the consultation as somebody giving you permission to have freedom?

A: I don't see it that way because if I like a thing I just inform him and I give him my reasons, I don't expect him to say yes or not. If I want it I'll just tell him, unfortunately it never happened where he said no.

Q: So suppose you like something for the sake of harmony you go and consult, what if he says no

A: It never happened, maybe it's because I negotiate so much that he will never say no, it never happened, it depends on how I present it to him.

Q: I am interested in that, how do you make it happen?

A: Obviously if I decide on something I ask him at the right time when kids are sleeping:

Q: Is it more like you present things to him in a respectful manner in an understanding manner rather than telling him what you have decided bluntly

A: Yes I do it in a respectful manner, there is no rush rush, we talk and we agree following reasons

Q: How do you see autonomy as it relates to power struggles, do you see any link between autonomy and power issues?

A: I am not sure, but yes. Somebody can take autonomy and independency as being power. For example, if you come into our house you will think I have power than my husband because I am more talkative and somehow I jump into taking decisions.

Q: So you would not say according to culture my husband must decide so I won't say anything, I'll wait for him to initiate a project because he will think I am being too independent, I am being too modern.

A: To tell the truth I think sometimes he feels I overpower him but he does not say it. Sometimes if we talk he'll even say if you have money, just buy it. It's like you bring whatever decision at home, you expect me to argue, I cannot, do it if you want. I think he has adopted that. I think he remembers our principles that don't stand on my way and I won't stay on your way. And that helps it gives freedom. Yes we do fight very seriously. What he told me once is that if it happens that we go separate ways, I won't take anything in the house, I'll go and you'll stay and that is the principle we adopted. We choose not to fight for material things because we won't even take those things to our graves.

Q: Is it because you feel you can still achieve independently, even if he is not around.

A: Yes