

**DISCOURSES ON AUTONOMY AND MARITAL SATISFACTON AMONG BLACK  
WOMEN IN DUAL-CAREER MARRIAGES**

by

MATETE DIAKO

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree:

DOCTOR IN PSYCHOLOGY

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR: Prof. C Wagner

October 2012

Pretoria

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all I thank the Lord for the wisdom and the ability he granted me to carry out this research project. I thank him for the strength and the guidance he provides in my life.

My three beautiful girls, Makgosi, Amai and Keamogetse, thank you for your unconditional love, your understanding and for the support you give me at all times. To my husband, your contribution in my life and towards this research is appreciated, thank you!

Thank you to all the participants that volunteered to take part in this research. Without them this thesis and the constructions in this thesis would not have been articulated.

To the late Prof. Johan Schoeman whose guidance, knowledge and support carried me through when this research started. He added tremendous value to this thesis and it was unfortunate that he did not live to see this work to completion.

Prof. Claire Wagner, thank you for stepping in and seeing me through the completion of this thesis. I am grateful for the meticulous guidance in constructing this work.

To all who have contributed in any way to my completion of this thesis, thank you and I will always be grateful to you.

## **ABSTRACT**

Literature on marriage shows that in the span of a single generation it has become the norm for both spouses to work outside the home. The inception of dual career marriages in the 1970s has created challenges and complications in the marital system as women break traditional gender roles in families and lead the way toward equality at home, just as they do in the industrial world. Black South African communities are no exception to this trend. The theoretical framework of social constructionism was used to identify the ways in which the participants construct their identities as Black professional women in dual career marriages. In-depth interviews were conducted with 11 Black professional women in dual career marriages to identify the discourses that construct their marriages, their autonomy in marriage and how their construction of autonomy influences their construction of marital satisfaction. The study found that cultural and Christian discourses inform the ways in which the participants construct marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction. Although the participants construct themselves as empowered and autonomous individuals, particularly in the workplace, they construct themselves as less autonomous within their marriages despite their expressed need to be seen as equal partners. As a result of their dual identities the participants consciously adopt different behaviours in different contexts and in this way reproduce dominant constructions of women.

## **KEY TERMS**

Dual career marriage, autonomy, culture, professional women, Christianity, power, autonomy, marital satisfaction, qualitative research, feminist discourse, social constructionism, discourse analysis

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2. Context of the study</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3. Rationale and objectives for the study</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.4. Research questions</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>1.5. Theoretical framework</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1.6. Research approach</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>1.7. Definition of terms/key constructs/concepts</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>1.8. Outline of Chapters</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>1.9. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
<b>LITERATURE AND THEORY</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>2.2 From modernism to post-modernism</b> .....	<b>22</b>
2.2.1 Cybernetics.....	24
2.2.2 Constructivism .....	26
2.2.3 Social constructionism .....	27
2.2.4 Language as discourse.....	32
2.3 Discussions on culture.....	33
2.4 Gender and power .....	39
2.4.1 A feminist framework .....	42
<b>2.5 Formation of an identity</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>2.6 Literature review on marriage, autonomy and marital satisfaction</b> .....	<b>49</b>
2.6.2.4 The Christian discourse on marriage .....	59
<b>2.7 The social construction of autonomy</b> .....	<b>71</b>
2.7.3 The gender discourse and autonomy .....	77
2.7.4 The legal discourse and autonomy .....	78
2.7.5 Christian discourse and autonomy.....	78
2.7.6 The marital discourse and autonomy .....	79
2.7.7 Summary and conclusion.....	81

<b>2.8 Marital satisfaction</b> .....	<b>82</b>
2.8.1 Overview of marital satisfaction .....	84
2.8.2 Autonomy and marital satisfaction .....	85
2.8.3 Dual career marriage and marital satisfaction.....	87
2.9 Conclusion .....	89

## CHAPTER 3

<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>91</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>91</b>
<b>3.2 Research methodology</b> .....	<b>92</b>
<b>3.3 Justification for using qualitative research</b> .....	<b>93</b>
3.3.1 Justification for using interviews.....	95
3.3.2 Sampling .....	96
3.3.3 Ethical considerations .....	99
<b>3.4 Data collection process</b> .....	<b>102</b>
<b>3.5 Reflexivity in qualitative research</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>3.6 Data analysis</b> .....	<b>109</b>
<b>3.7 Discourse analysis</b> .....	<b>110</b>
<b>3.8 The process of analysis</b> .....	<b>116</b>
3.8.1 Phase 1.....	117
3.8.2 Phase 2.....	118
3.8.3 Phase 3.....	119
<b>3.9 Validity and reliability in qualitative research</b> .....	<b>120</b>
3.9.1 Ensuring validity in the project .....	122
3.9.2 Reliability in qualitative research.....	125
<b>3.10 Summary and conclusion</b> .....	<b>126</b>

## CHAPTER 4

<b>RESEARCH FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>128</b>
<b>4.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>128</b>
<b>4.2 Description of participants</b> .....	<b>129</b>
<b>4.3 Presentation of findings</b> .....	<b>131</b>
4.3.1 The participants' construction of marriage .....	132
4.3.2 The discourse of culture.....	135
4.3.3 The discourse of Christianity.....	143
4.3.4 The discourse of power.....	146

4.3.5	Autonomy, independence and freedom discourses .....	150
4.3.6	Fear and helplessness discourses.....	156
4.3.7	The discourse of satisfaction.....	157
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>		
	<b>DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>The participants’ constructions of marriage .....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Autonomy, independence and freedom discourses .....</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>The discourse of power .....</b>	<b>173</b>
5.4.1	Participants as powerless .....	173
5.4.2	Participants as equally powerful.....	175
5.4.3	Participants as empowered.....	176
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Fear and helplessness discourses.....</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>The discourse of satisfaction.....</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>The construction of the participants’ identity in dual-career marriages..</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>5.8</b>	<b>Answering the research questions.....</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>5.9</b>	<b>Reflections on the study .....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>5.10</b>	<b>Limitations of the study .....</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>5.11</b>	<b>Recommendations for future research.....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>5.12</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>195</b>
	<b>REFERENCE LIST .....</b>	<b>197</b>
	<b>APPENDIX A: .....</b>	<b>220</b>
	<b>CONSENT FORM.....</b>	<b>220</b>
	<b>APPENDIX B: .....</b>	<b>221</b>
	<b>INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS.....</b>	<b>221</b>