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.