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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 bringing 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 feel 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 lessened 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 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 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 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 there 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 bogged 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 won't 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 these 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 it 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 you 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 man's ego is very sensitive and I would not want to cause any unnecessary strife 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 your 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 might 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 these 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 viewpoints and hence God gave us brains. Your husband needs to respect your viewpoint. For example my husband does 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 do 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 in such a way that women are getting educated and they are holding senior positions at work. At the same time marriage I think 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 won't 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 than 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 3 months, do you want to contribute and if he says he can't, 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 respectful way, you do that.

A: You have. You know men are like kids, if you don't say your point clearly he won't understand so you must make sure that you express that this thing I won't 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 emphasize 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 won't 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