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

by

MATETE DIAKO

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SUPERVISOR: Prof. C Wagner

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ABSTRACT

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

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