

**‘Gender’ and constructions of spousal mourning among the AmaXhosa in the  
Eastern Cape**

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## ABSTRACT

Among the AmaXhosa the death of a person is marked by a tradition called *ukuzila* - the equivalent of the mourning process. As a sign of spousal mourning, and to show respect, the remaining spouse has to put on a marker (be visible). However, it is mostly the woman who is under obligation to show her mourner status by wearing 'clothes of mourning'. The discriminatory nature of the practice, especially pertaining to visibility and some of the detrimental effects on the widows' health and safety have been documented by some researchers, but the reasons for the continuity of visibility remain largely unexplored. Taking into account the dynamic nature of 'culture', this research explored the discourses deployed in men and women's constructions of *ukuzila* specifically focusing on spousal mourning and the continuity of widows' visibility in spite of their resistance to it.

The research used postcolonial feminism drawing on poststructuralism as its theoretical lens. This theoretical lens provided useful concepts such as hybridity, visibility, surveillance and power with which to examine spousal mourning and conceptualised people's subject positions as multiple, fluid and contingent. Furthermore, the research employed thematic and discourse analysis as its methodology. Discourse analysis was employed to identify and analyse the discourses utilised in the constructions of spousal mourning. The research was conducted through focus group discussions held with younger and older urban and rural men and women, as well as interviews held with widows and widowers and key cultural informants.

Concerning the question of constructions of spousal mourning for men and women, visibility of the mourner emerged as a central and contentious issue. Some participants were of the view that one could show mourning by engaging in culturally appropriate mourning behaviour, whilst others were of the view that showing one's mourning had to be visible by publicly displaying mourning through a marker. Another group proposed mourning "by heart", whereby the mourners' status could either be inferred from their behaviour, whereas others maintained that behaviour was not mandatory.

Various justifications for the continued visibility of widows were advanced. These justifications included showing love and respect to the deceased husband; showing respect to the ancestors; and helping to monitor their own behaviour in order to ensure that it is in line with appropriate mourning behaviour. The continued visibility of widows was also used to regulate the widows' sexuality. Widows were coerced to put on 'clothes of mourning' in order to 'protect' them from being approached by men for a relationship during the mourning period. The regulation of the movement of widows was also managed through visibility. Widows' movements were restricted in order to protect the community from pollution or bad luck. For example, they were not allowed to visit places of entertainment or visit other households.

Key discourses identified were the familial-'*ukwenda*', respect-'*hlonipha*', and male sexual drive (MSD) discourse. The familial - '*ukwenda*' discourse is centred on the idea that one is 'married to the household', which includes the nuclear family and wider extended family including ancestors. According to the respect-'*hlonipha*' discourse, respect is due to others on the basis of their age, status, and more especially their gender. Showing respect (*hlonipha*) necessitates the avoidance of all forms of behaviour and utterances that could be deemed disrespectful. The MSD holds a widespread view of sexuality as a biological drive that resides within each male and it was drawn on to make sense of discontinued visibility among widowers, whilst visibility of widows continued. It is argued that it is these discourses, embedded in the 'culture' of the AmaXhosa and upheld by the family that sustain the discriminatory nature of the practice, especially concerning the continued visibility of widows in spite of the resistance that has been voiced.

## **DECLARATION**

I am the sole author of this thesis.

No part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

To the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any property rights. Any ideas, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people that I have included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines.

This is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my supervisor.

This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my two sets of parents: Pinkerton ‘Dikeni’ and Vivienne ‘Goldengirl’ Nxasana (biological parents); and Slingsby and Nozipho Nxasana who took me under their wing from the age of 8 to 12 in order to give me a better education.

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## **CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE SCENE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore gendered constructions of *ukuzila*/mourning among the AmaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. My interest in the topic was sparked by a comment made on a radio show that “*Ungumfazi nje uza kuzila*”, meaning: “For as long as you are a woman you are going to mourn”. The radio show was hosted by an isiXhosa radio station (*Umhlobo wenene*) which broadcasts throughout South Africa in isiXhosa. The particular show, titled ‘12 down’, discusses cultural practices, customs and traditions with respect to their contemporary relevance. It thus acknowledges the ‘fluidity’ rather than the ‘fixity’ of culture. The comment was made by a man at the climax of the debate held in May 2002 around the visibility of a widow. Traditionally, it was taboo for the marked widow to move around and be seen outside of her home (Soga, 1937/89). However, nowadays, due to economic considerations and other factors, she has to take care of matters pertaining to the husband’s death and to continue working as the sole bread winner. In the past, women did not work outside the home and traditionally the men went out to work. At this point in the debate, most men were supporting the view that, in consideration of the changed circumstances, the widow should not be marked (by wearing ‘clothes of mourning’) because ‘going around’ in ‘clothes of mourning’ discredits the practice. This is the point at which the man made his comment. I was under the impression at the time that a spouse automatically mourns the death of her/his partner regardless of gender, and so I started investigating the issue.

A literature search on Google Scholar for articles on *ukuzila* amongst the AmaXhosa revealed that very little has been written on the subject. There is slightly more on mourning in general in South Africa and Africa, but not a substantial amount. The dearth of literature on *ukuzila* among AmaXhosa brought about further interest in the study.

The intention of the current research is to explore constructions of spousal mourning for men and women, resistances to those constructions, the discourses underlying the

constructions, as well as the subject positions emanating from the discourses (see later discussion of subject positions and discourses). The exploration of constructions of spousal mourning incorporates current constructions of spousal mourning for men and women, as well as how such current constructions are shaped by interpretations of historical practices related to spousal mourning. The interpretations of historical practices related to spousal mourning are examined with the purpose of looking into how they might be employed as justification for current understandings and power relations. The following paragraphs provide a brief background to *ukuzila* as practices by the AmaXhosa and other cultures.

### BRIEF BACKGROUND

In almost all cultures, the death of a person is marked by a mourning period as a way of giving respect to the dead. This period allows for the bereaved person to come to terms with the loss of the loved one. However, how each culture deals with the loss and how mourning is carried out tends to differ from one culture to another, although there might be some commonalities (Kastenbaum, 2004; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007; Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen & Stroebe, 1992). Such differences consist of spiritual beliefs, expectations, customs and rituals based on traditional beliefs (Parkes, Laugani & Young, 1997; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). Kastenbaum (2004, p. 353) has captured these differences by asserting that mourning is “the culturally patterned expression of the bereaved person’s thoughts and feelings.” Among the AmaXhosa, the death of a person is marked by a cultural practice called *ukuzila*, which is the group’s equivalent of the mourning process which focuses on the outward expression of mourning. *Ukuzila* is also used to refer specifically to spousal mourning.

Following on from Kastenbaum’s (2004) definition above, mourning represents the actions and modes of expressing grief in accordance with the prescriptions of one’s culture. *Ukuzila* has been variously defined by anthropologists (Hirst, 2006; Pauw, 1975) as meaning abstaining from, hiding from or avoiding something.

According to Pahl, Pienaar and Ndungane (1989), in the past, when someone passed away, especially the head of the family, the wife of the deceased hid herself in the forest during the day, and the man, if the woman died, was prohibited from leaving

the homestead. The rest of the family was not allowed to mix with people, and the family's heads were shaved; all work was suspended in that household as well as in the whole village. Overall, the various restrictions or avoidances were applicable to dress, diet and the performance of chores, and social as well as sexual relations (Pauw, 1975).

However, due to changing socio-contextual factors, some of these practices no longer exist in this form. For example, instead of the wife hiding in the forest, she sits on a mattress or *ukhuko* (grass mat) behind the door (Pahl, Pienaar & Ndungane, 1989). The idea of the bereaved wife hiding in the forest was to prevent her from contaminating others due to the belief among AmaXhosa that death pollutes those with whom the bereaved comes into contact (Hirst, 2006). Certain rituals are performed during this period of hiding to redress the impurity, after which the person is reincorporated into society. *Ukuzila* is discussed in more depth in the chapter on mourning. In recognition of the changing nature of *ukuzila*, I was interested in understanding how *ukuzila* mourning practices were constructed historically, as compared to how they are currently constructed.

One of the major themes that arose in the research was the issue of visibility. Literature indicates the presence of gendered forms of visibility in mourning practices in a range of cultures and historical periods. For example, the English during the Victorian age restricted widows' activities to church services in the first year of mourning; they were not allowed to exit their homes without wearing black attire and a weeping veil, whereas a widower could carry on with his daily life and continue to work (Hell, 2001; Taylor, 1982). In certain parts of rural Greece, women are expected to wear black, which is their colour of mourning, for the rest of their lives and are expected not to remarry (Danforth, 1982); failure to do so results in their being targets of gossip. On the other hand, men may put on a black armband for the rest of their lives and may remarry without criticism (Danforth, 1982).

In addition to dress, the rituals and observances related to mourning practices frequently affect women the most. An example is the practice of *sati* in India, whereby the Hindu widow immolates herself on the funeral pyre with her husband's body (Lamb, 2000; Loomba, 1996; Rajan, 1993). In some Hindu communities widows are isolated, put in their own community and treated as 'outcasts' from the

rest of society (Loomba, 1996). Sossou (2002) has highlighted the plight of widows and their suffering in relation to their social, economic, psychological and human rights violation in the West African countries of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria. Widows in these countries face economic dispossession, for example, the property of their husbands is transferred to the in-laws, sometimes they are evicted from their homes and they face social ostracism as they are excluded from any form of entertainment and social ceremonies. This results in loneliness and depression (Sossou, 2002). In Nigeria, a man is free to remarry soon after he has buried his wife, but this is not the case with a woman mourning the death of her husband (Amadiume, 1995). In South Africa, widows from the AmaHlubi, AmaXhosa, AmaZulu, AbaSotho and AbaTswana tribes are expected to mourn for a longer period than widowers (Akol, 2011; Magudu, 2004; Manyedi, Koen & Greef, 2003; Pauw, 1990; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007).

A number of studies on spousal mourning and gender in South Africa have highlighted health issues related to some of the practices. For example, Manyedi et al.'s (2003) research underscores the stress brought about by widowhood due to isolation and other prescribed customs; Magudu (2004) underlines the health issues related to such rituals as widows having to wash at night by the river. Washing by the river at night could lead to the widow getting a cold or flu as a result of exposure to cold water. Somhlaba and Wait (2008) put emphasis on the stress and depression that might follow the loss. Other researchers highlight the danger of contracting HIV/Aids, for example, through the employment of such practices as *ukungena/levirate*, whereby the brother of the deceased husband takes over conjugal rights to the widow as well as through widow inheritance (Schoepf, 1997).

## THE STUDY

The central questions posed in this research are:

- (i) How do men and women construct *ukuzila* for (a) men, and (b) women?
- (ii) How is the practice of spousal mourning constructed by the AmaXhosa as a historical versus as a contemporary practice?
- (iii) What discourses mediate these constructions?

- (iv) How are men and women positioned in relation to the constructions and discourses of *ukuzila*?
- (v) How are the constructions of *ukuzila* resisted?

The theoretical framework that framed this research was postcolonial feminism, drawing on poststructuralism. Postcolonial feminism offers useful insights in terms of complexity, contingency, plurality/multiplicity of meaning and identities. It allows for contradictions between different ways of describing something. For example, concepts like culture and *ukuzila*/mourning are viewed as socially constructed, laden with multiple meanings and subject to historical and cultural specificity, rather than as static. Cultural practices are regarded as contingent, complex and multiple in this theoretical framework. In this research, the various meanings attached to the mourning processes were explored.

Both postcolonialism and poststructuralism pay attention to issues of power and this research makes use of Foucault's notion of power and resistance. Spousal mourning turned out to be a cultural practice laden with power relations based on gender. Foucault's notion of power and resistance provided a useful tool in examining the operation of power in the practice, as well as the resistance offered. Concepts such as hybridity (as articulated by Bhabha, 1994), visibility and surveillance were also utilised to shed light on spousal mourning. Hybridity manifested itself in the practice of spousal mourning in such instances as the incorporation of Western clothing. 'German prints', a form of German textile brought by colonialists from Germany became an acceptable form of 'clothes of mourning' for women, and elaborate funerals involving much feasting followed by 'after tears' parties became popular. These aspects are taken up in the analysis chapter. Foucault's concepts of visibility and surveillance were utilised to shed light on the visibility of women's mourning compared to that of men. Visibility and surveillance were further linked to power relations which were focused on gender. As indicated, the continuity of women's visibility is an important aspect of this research. Positioning theory as informed by Davies and Harré (1990) and van Langenhove and Harré (1999) was employed to analyse the diversity and multiplicity of men and women's subject positionings which were evident in their different takes on the contentious issue of widow's visibility, with some in support of visibility, whilst others were against it. Furthermore, since

identities are not considered as fixed but multiple, the AmaXhosa are regarded not as a homogenous group but heterogeneous, along various lines of location such as socio-economic status, gender, age, religion and so on.

Regarding the use of discourse in this research, discourse is understood in the poststructuralist sense of referring to “a system of statements which construct an object” (Parker, 1992, p. 5 & 2005, p. 145). The statements made by the participants when discussing *ukuzila* are considered as constructions, providing a particular way of talking about and thus constituting *ukuzila*. A further elaboration on the meaning of the concept of discourse is undertaken in the methodology chapter when discussing ‘understandings of the notion of discourse’.

In addition to the discursive constructions employed in the discussions of *ukuzila*, the thesis pays particular attention to the continuation of visibility for women, as well as justifications for this in spite of its branding by women as discriminatory, unfair, as imprisonment and as punishment (Kotze, Els & Rajuili-Masilo, 2012; Magudu, 2004; Manyedi et al., 2003). These discursive constructions of *ukuzila* have continued notwithstanding the extensive political, economic and religious changes that have taken place. The discriminatory nature of the practice, particularly with respect to the visibility of the widow and some of the detrimental effects to the widows’ health and safety have been researched, but the discursive practices underpinning its continuity remain largely unexplored. It is argued that it is the discourses deployed in men and women’s constructions of *ukuzila*, embedded in their ‘culture’ and upheld by the family institution that sustain the practice in spite of the recognition of its discriminatory nature and its detrimental effects to the widows’ health and safety.

In order to achieve the aims of the study, focus group discussions with younger and older men and women as well as interviews with widows and widowers and cultural custodians were utilised. Data were generated through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were held with men and women from broad generational ranges residing in rural and urban areas. The individual interviews were conducted with widows and widowers and with key cultural informants. Interviews and focus group discussions centred on the exploration of social and cultural meanings of spousal mourning. In addition, the

interviews explored the widows' and widowers' personal experience of these aspects of spousal mourning. The study revealed that spousal mourning is a practice fraught with multiple understandings, contradictions, complexities, contingencies, dilemmas, collusions and resistance.

To analyse the data, this study employed a combination of thematic analysis and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis was used to shed light on the constructions of *ukuzila* for men and women (the first research question), and on how the practice of spousal mourning is constructed by the AmaXhosa as a historical versus as a contemporary practice (the second research question). The themes that emerged from thematic analysis were then used as the basis for the carrying out of discourse analysis, which employed Parker's (1992 & 2005) criteria for analysing discourse (see further discussion in Chapter 5).

The following section presents the contextual backdrop to the study. It provides the socio-cultural, political and economic history of the province where the study was conducted. It also considers the socio-political developments under colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, and how these affected burial practices. This subsection is provided specifically for readers unfamiliar with the South African context. The section further offers narratives of African and AmaXhosa 'belief systems' and their understandings of gender and sexuality. Spousal mourning among the AmaXhosa can be best understood in the context of family and marriage, and how relationships between men and women are structured in it. For this reason, the section provides an account of narratives of the AmaXhosa notions of family, 'traditional' marriage and of *ukuzila* practice in its 'pure' form.

## CONTEXT

Spousal mourning among the AmaXhosa can be best understood in the context in which it is practiced. Given the Eastern Cape setting of this study, a brief background with regard to its socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural context follows. Included in this background is the political history of the Eastern Cape which incorporates colonialist infiltration, frontier wars, the Eastern Cape as the ANC stronghold both during and after apartheid, the creation of homelands, and issues of

poverty and unemployment. In addition, it covers what are referred to as AmaXhosa belief systems, and issues of sexuality. This account must, of necessity, be brief and lack the nuance that would accompany more in-depth discussions. The purpose is to acknowledge the locatedness of practices and discourses concerning mourning.

IsiXhosa (the language spoken by the AmaXhosa) speakers are mostly located in the province of Eastern Cape where the study was conducted. Prior to democracy, the Eastern Cape was divided into the homeland of the Ciskei, the homeland of the Transkei, and sections of the Western Cape, designated for 'white' people. Map 1 below shows the former homeland areas before 1994.



Map 1: Old map of South Africa, pre-1994

Source: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/special-features/homelands>

With democracy came the creation of new provinces, one of which is the Eastern Cape. Map 2 below shows the current provinces, including the Eastern Cape within which the research was conducted.



Map 2: Map of South Africa, post -1994 with 9 provinces

Source: [http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/south\\_africa\\_provinces.jpg](http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/south_africa_provinces.jpg)

The study was conducted in East London and surrounding areas (A on the map) and in King William's Town and surrounding areas (B on the map). Map 3 below shows the location of the sites in which the data was collected.



Map 3: Map of the Eastern Cape Province showing sites of data collection

- A) East London and surrounding areas
- B) King William's Town and surrounding areas

**Source:** [http://www.southafricaholiday.org.uk/images/mapdetail\\_easterncape.jpg](http://www.southafricaholiday.org.uk/images/mapdetail_easterncape.jpg)

### *Socio-political context*

The current socio-political landscape of the Eastern Cape has been largely influenced by both its colonial and apartheid past. Prior to colonialism, the political system of traditional AmaXhosa was under the administration of kings, assisted by chiefs. The chiefs, regarded as the “custodians of custom” (Bongela, 2001. p. 47) were then assisted by councillors (headmen) made up of the elders of each clan. The chief presided over a traditional court, composed of male members only, to resolve disputes and other matters. These traditional courts operated under gerontocracy, which is government under the leadership of old men (Bongela, 2001). The exclusion of women from attending the traditional courts where decisions pertaining to community policies were undertaken demonstrates that women were not granted the same

political and social status as men (Mandela, 1993). This is reflective of the patriarchal culture of the AmaXhosa.

With the advent of colonialism, the institution of chieftaincy was greatly altered. This was partly a consequence of what were termed 'Xhosa wars' or Frontier wars, a series of wars from 1778 to 1878 in the Eastern Cape. These wars were triggered by an ongoing conflict over grazing land, cattle and hunting needs among the AmaXhosa and the Dutch; the Dutch and British and the British and the AmaXhosa (Khabela, 1996; MacKinnon, 2003; Mostert, 1992). The wars resulted in the imprisonment and killing of some of the chiefs whose cattle were then seized and who were dispossessed of their land by the colonialists. Thus the AmaXhosa lost a lot of their land through these wars due to the appropriation of land from the chiefdoms. The AmaXhosa were subsequently incorporated into the British Empire (Khabela, 1996; Mostert, 1992). The incorporation into British rule meant that the chiefs lost some of their control of their 'subjects'. Compounding the socio-political landscape was the arrival of missionaries who also had clashes with the chiefs. Some of the AmaXhosa who were converted left their homesteads to live with the missionaries and this increased animosity between the missionaries and the chiefs. The missionaries undermined the traditional AmaXhosa lifestyle such as their dress code (the converts were expected to wear 'European clothes'), the practice of polygamy, and the 'payment' of *lobola*, as well as their belief system which incorporated the ancestors (Khabela, 1996; Mostert, 1992). These issues are addressed later on in this context section.

Another contributing factor to the transformation of the rule of chiefs was the introduction of Bantustans or homelands by the apartheid government. These homelands were established by the Black Authorities Act of 1951 which made it legal for black people to be deported to newly created homeland reserves in rural areas. Ethnic boundaries and puppet governments were then set up to administer them but under the overall rule of the apartheid government (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005; Ratele, 2007). Those chiefs who resisted the homeland system were deposed, dispossessed of their land and replaced by compliant chiefs who were imposed on the people (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005). This meant that the chiefs' political control over their subjects was further subverted. The chiefs who were opposed to the homeland

system were to later form the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA), which is discussed below.

The 1980s were a time during which civic and political organizations such as the United Democratic Front (UDF, 1986) emerged and challenged the oppression by the apartheid government and undermined the power structure of chiefs (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005). The democratic organizations under the banner of UDF accused the chiefs of misappropriation of the 'tribal levies' (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005; Murray, 2004). They also alleged that the chiefs were coercive agents of Bantustan regimes and therefore not capable of coexisting with a democratic government (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005; Murray, 2004). However, some of the chiefs from the homeland of KwaNdebele who had resisted the Bantustan policy formed CONTRALESA in 1987 and approached the African National Congress (ANC) government in exile regarding their role in the struggle (Murray, 2004; Ntsebeza, 2005). CONTRALESA subsequently incorporated other traditional leaders and chiefs. The ANC had promised to include the chiefs once in power but the relationship between the two deteriorated after the ANC was in power and the role, place and powers of traditional leaders were never spelt out (Ntsebeza, 2005). Whilst some democratic organizations and people from exile supported chiefs, others were strongly opposed to them on the basis that some chiefs were part and parcel of the apartheid Bantustans (MacKinnon, 2003; Murray, 2004). CONTRALESA continued to put pressure on the government for the recognition of the rights of traditional leaders and current debates centre on the reintroduction of the Traditional Courts Bill of 2012, which is discussed shortly.

The mounting pressure put on the South African government by the liberation movements in exile, the international community, as well as organisations within South Africa resulted in the release of political prisoners in 1990, and the unbanning of political parties (Mackinnon, 2003). This marked the beginning of transition to democracy. Intense negotiations for a free and democratic South Africa followed and, in 1994, the first democratic elections were held, and Nelson Mandela was elected as the first president of a democratic South Africa. South Africa is now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year of democracy. Building democracy after apartheid has had its successes and challenges. While the government has begun the process of land restitution, and been able to provide houses for the people, supply running water, electrify homes and

provide other basic services that the people previously did not have access to, it has not reached many of its targets (MacKinnon, 2003). Post democracy challenges include gross inequities which continue to plague South African society, as evidenced in the violent demonstrations from poorer sectors of society for service delivery concerning the provision of such basic needs as water, sanitation and health services, and the increased violence against women. Poverty, unemployment and related ills remain major issues as pointed out in the socio-economic context below.

As part of the transformation process, the Traditional Courts Bill was first introduced in 2008, to restore the powers of the chiefs that were taken away from them by the colonialists and the apartheid government. However, it was withdrawn due to fierce opposition especially from civic organizations. According to the bill, traditional leaders/local chiefs are to be granted legal powers to make customary law compulsory, take care of civil cases, pronounce judgement and prosecute (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005). This also means that the defendants will not have right to legal representation. During the public hearings, a lot of rural people highlighted the abuse of tribal courts by tribal chiefs, especially against women. The bill has once again come under fierce criticism from various quarters, especially women's rights groups and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) who have branded it as unconstitutional.

Another thorny issue concerning traditional leadership and the democratic government has been around municipalities. The establishment of municipalities throughout the country has thrown into uncertainty the scope of local powers by chiefs (Murray, 2004). The chiefs had proposed that traditional authorities replace municipal government in rural areas, but the demarcation process has ignored boundaries of traditional communities, thus affecting service delivery, and this issue dominates current debates (Murray, 2004). The chiefs still have no constitutionally guaranteed role in municipalities and responsibilities that were formally undertaken by chiefs have now been taken over by municipalities (Murray, 2004).

As part of its socio-political heritage, Eastern Cape has been known as the African National Congress's (ANC) stronghold both during and after apartheid. The first two ANC presidents of post-apartheid South Africa came from this region. However, the

other heritage of this region has been the impact of colonial rule and apartheid policies and the struggle against this legacy has divided the Eastern Cape along racial, social and economic lines. At present, it is one of the poorest regions, with the highest rate of unemployment at 37.4% (Statistics South Africa, 2012). The following section addresses the socio-economic context of the Eastern Cape.

### *Socio-economic context*

Prior to colonisation, the indigenous economy of the AmaXhosa consisted of agricultural and pastoral farming as well as hunting, the former generally associated with women and the latter with men (Mandela, 1993; Peires, 1976). Furthermore, manufacturing consisted of basket work, pottery, matting and woodwork (Peires, 1976). The introduction of a capitalist economy in the Eastern Cape (home of the majority of the AmaXhosa) and elsewhere in the country meant that various industries were developed in urban areas and this necessitated a huge and cheap labour force (Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1974; Parkard, 2009). Subsequently, pressure in the form of payment of taxes was put on rural households as a way of enforcing the need for men, in particular, to find paid labour. Furthermore, since the colonialists had appropriated land from the chiefs thereby decreasing the local people's land, the land yielded fewer crops (Khabela, 1996; Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1974). This resulted in the gradual erosion of the indigenous subsistence economy and the people were no longer self-sufficient. Consequently, they had to seek work in the mines and other industrial and commercial centres in urban spaces away from their rural homesteads, in order to 'work for a living', whilst retaining their rural homesteads (Kassel & van Oomen, 2005; Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1974; Parkard, 2009). This led to the disruption of indigenous familial gender roles, as the women who were left behind in the homesteads had to assume the role of 'mother' and 'father' (Mandela, 1993).

At first, the movement from traditional rural homesteads to urban spaces was controlled by the then government through 'influx control' laws. The Influx Control Act of 1945 was passed whereby only working men were allowed in the urban areas, which were regarded as 'the White man's place'. According to this Act, they had to be officially registered and get a 'permit' and a pass which were renewed annually in

their home village, and to remain in the urban areas for the duration of their employment. If one was unemployed, then one's 'permit' was withdrawn or not renewed. The renewal of the permit necessitated that the migrant worker return to his rural homestead and get authorization from the chief who charged a certain levy for the registration (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005; Parkard, 2009).

In 1986 pass laws which controlled the movement of African people were abolished. The implication for the chiefs was loss of authority and control over migrants and the income they obtained from the levies for authorization (Murray, 2004). As a result, the chiefs introduced other measures to make up for the lost income. For example, they introduced other tribal levies such as for schools, clinics and post offices (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005).

The Eastern Cape is currently experiencing a number of socio-economic challenges as evidenced in a number of indicators. It has the second highest rate of unemployment at 37.4%, and has the second highest functional illiteracy rate at 26.5%, with 10% of those included in this rate having had no schooling at all (Statistics South Africa, 2012). In addition, the Eastern Cape's average household income was the second lowest in the country, with Limpopo taking the lead. These figures are quite revealing of the quality of life in the Eastern Cape as the level of education is linked to future engagement in the labour market. Furthermore, the Eastern Cape has the highest migration outflow, which would explain its decline from a population of 15, 1% of the national population in 1996 to 12.7% in 2011 (Statistics South Africa, 2012). The migration outflow and the decrease in population could be explained as lack of employment opportunities in the Eastern Cape as reflected in its unemployment rate. The following section covers general socio-political developments with respect to death, funerals and mourning.

#### ***General socio-political developments with respect to death, funerals and mourning***

Burial societies, a key feature of the mourning landscape in South Africa, emerged in the 1880's in response to pauper burials of African people by the colonial and apartheid governments, (Kotze et al., 2012; Lee, 2011). These burial societies, spear-headed by women, sought to preserve the dignity of death, bereavement and grief of

African people (Kotze et al., 2012; Lee, 2011; Semanya, 2013). Membership was mainly on the basis of shared cultural and rural roots (Semanya, 2013). For example, AmaXhosa from the Eastern Cape, or AbeSotho from Lesotho would form their respective burial societies. A monthly contribution per member would be agreed upon. The members organised finances and all the necessary requirements for having a dignified funeral, including the maintenance of traditional practices (Kotze et al., 2012). The funds would then be used to provide for things like the coffin, the funeral ceremony and catering for the people attending the funeral (Molobi, 2006; Semanya, 2013). This provision of caring solidarity to the deceased was undertaken as a form of resistance to the then government's pauper burial policy (Kotze et al., 2012). The pauper burials were undertaken by the government when the deceased's next of kin could not be traced or when next of kin could not take responsibility for the cost of the funeral, especially during the early years of labour migration to the mines (Kotze et al., 2012; Lee, 2011; Molobi, 2006). Presently, according to the Health Act of 1977, it is the municipality's responsibility to pay for the burial of the destitute or an unclaimed body. Currently, burial societies include men and women, young and old. According to Molobi (2006), this trend has been sparked by the scourge of HIV/Aids, which has given rise to frequent deaths of both young and old.

During the apartheid era, political movements used funerals of deceased political leaders as a platform for what Ramphele (1996, p. 106) has referred to as a "political theatre". In these political funerals, struggle songs were sung and memorabilia such as T-shirts bearing the slogans of the banned political parties, and faces of the struggle heroes, who were either banned, imprisoned or in exile were displayed (Ramphele, 1996). The biological family of the deceased played a less important role than the political family of the deceased, and the funeral turned out to be a site of political resistance to the apartheid state (Ramphele, 1996). The widows of these struggle heroes were referred to as "political widows" (Ramphele, 1996, p. 101). However, not all political widows were acknowledged as such, nor were all political widows bereaved of their husbands (Ramphele, 1996, p. 101). The term "political widowhood" (Ramphele, 1996, p. 101) encompassed those whose husbands were sentenced to long term imprisonment and the term was thus a symbol of resistance and defiance to the apartheid state.

In recent years, a new trend of lavish funerals followed by ‘after tears’ parties have emerged among black urban South Africans (Dlukulu, 2010; Kotze et al., 2012). In these funerals, the mood tends to be more celebratory rather than sad and solemn. The funerals are characterised by lavish catering, use of portable lawns and upmarket burial societies, with the corpse and bereaved family transported in a Limousine (Kotze et al., 2012). After the funeral, as a way of coming to terms with the loss, the family and friends organise an ‘after tears’ party in which alcohol is served and music and dancing abound (Dlukulu, 2010; Kotze et al., 2012). The aspect of ‘after tears’ and celebratory funerals was also raised by the participants in this study as a cause for concern and is taken up in the analysis chapter. The following section addresses the socio-cultural context of the AmaXhosa in the Eastern Cape.

### *Socio-cultural context*

Discourses and practices that are viewed as ‘cultural’ enable people to connect their present with the past and afford them with a sense of belonging and continuity. This is particularly the case in rapidly transforming societies like Africa, where, owing to colonial infiltration, African people’s ‘local knowledge’, defined as “prior assumptions and recipes for life borne out of engaging in everyday activities in the local setting” (Gilbert, 1997, p. 275) has been threatened and dominated.

In the section below, ways in which ‘culture’ and the AmaXhosa have been understood are addressed. Much of what has been said about ‘culture’ and the AmaXhosa assume that these are bounded and static and therefore can be subject to preservation. Some researchers reify and homogenize ‘culture’ and the AmaXhosa. This is not the way in which ‘culture’ and the AmaXhosa are used in this study. Rather than being assumed as static and as something that can be preserved, ‘culture’ and other forms of identity (including the AmaXhosa) are viewed as multiple and fluid. A pluralistic and dynamic view of ‘culture’ and identity was explained in the outline of the theoretical framework above (see further explication in Chapter 2) and is the lens used in this research. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the manner in which ‘culture’ and the ‘AmaXhosa belief systems’ have been constructed as static.

The constructions are utilised in the constructions of mourning, and therefore warrant some explanation.

*'AmaXhosa belief system'*

Most work on 'culture' and African traditional practices has centred on the idea of 'belief systems', the assumption being that one cannot understand the 'culture' without first understanding the 'African belief system' (Solomon, 1986). This points to the specificities and particularities of cultures. Central to this 'belief system' is the existence of ancestors or 'the living dead' as part of the cosmology of Africans and AmaXhosa. This is different from the western notion of ancestors as one's forebears. According to this 'belief system', 'there is life after death', and an interconnection between the living and the dead. Consequently, customs and value systems of the AmaXhosa are to a large extent informed by this 'belief system'. The reference to ancestors as 'the living dead' is due to the belief that although dead physically, they carry on living as spirits, residing in the cattle kraal and continuing their membership in the family, community and society (Bongela, 2001; Burmann, 1984; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Hirst, 2005; Khabela, 1996; Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1994; Mbithi, 1989; Mkhize, 2004; Mokwena, 2007; Pauw, 1975; Soga, 1937/89; Solomon, 1986; Zide 1984). To ensure the continuity of the family beyond death, special ceremonies, *ukukhapha* – 'saying good bye' and *ukubuyisa* - 'bring back' / 'return ritual' are held. *Ukukhapha* involves slaughtering a cow which is part of accompanying the spirit of the deceased on its journey to the spirit world (Bongela, 2001; Hirst, 2005; Soga, 1937/89; Solomon, 1986; van Heerden, 2002). After a year or so, the spirit of the deceased is returned from the world of the dead to join the ancestors through *ukubuyisa*, thus reincorporating the deceased into the family (Jordan, 1960/2004; van Heerden, 2002; Mkhize, 2004).

Furthermore, ancestors expect their people to conduct themselves well and preserve their traditional norms. Compliance with the wishes of ancestors, for example, regarding the maintenance and correct performance of certain rites and practices is believed to result in the protection of the people and the nation from evil and destructive sources, providing them with good health, happiness and good fortune (Bongela, 2001; Burmann, 1984; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Hirst, 2005; Mayer &

Mayer, 1994; Mkhize, 2004; Mokwena, 2007; Pauw, 1975; Peires, 1976; Soga, 1937/89; Solomon, 1986; Zide, 1984). However, if the people neglect the customs, the ancestors are believed to turn their backs on them, withdrawing their protection, thus causing the people to be vulnerable to misfortune, ill-health and unhappiness. For this reason, the ancestors are held in reverence and fear by those who hold this 'belief system'. Fear of the ancestor's wrath has been cited as the reason for compliance with the traditional norms, both in the literature as well as in this study (Mostert, 1992; Peires, 1976). This aspect is taken up in the analysis section as it also emerged from the data with regard to the continuation of visibility by women despite enforced visibility being perceived as unfair. The next section deals with some 'cultural practices' and rituals which are informed by the 'African beliefs'. These 'cultural practices' and rituals have much to do with the constructions of manhood and womanhood, reproduction and intimate gender relations, all of which form a context within which spousal mourning takes place.

#### *AmaXhosa 'cultural practices'*

Among the AmaXhosa, a number of what have been termed 'cultural practices' have been put in place in order to socially mark and celebrate life-cycle transitions. The following provide some examples: a ceremony called *imbeleko* is held in order to signify the birth of a child, and to introduce the child to her/his extended family, including the ancestors; in order to mark transition from boyhood to manhood, *ulwaluko* (male circumcision) is practiced as an initiation rite and *intonjane* for girls who have reached puberty; when a young woman is engaged to be married, *lobola* is given to her family to legalise the transition to her new status and to strengthen ties between the two families (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Hirst, 2005; Mbithi, 1969; Mostert, 1992; Mtuze, 1999; Pauw, 1975; Sityana, 1990; Soga, 1937/1984; Zide, 1984).

However, these practices have undergone a number of changes over time. Traditionally, during the *imbeleko* ceremony, an ox would be slaughtered and the skin used as a blanket for holding the baby but now a goat or sheep is slaughtered. In addition to introducing the child, the rationale was to ensure that everything pertaining to the child's well-being was taken care of, and to prevent bad habits such

as enuresis (Sityana, 1990). At present, although some people still practice *imbeleko* in its original form, it has been replaced by the christening ceremony for some, and the celebration of the child's first birthday due to the influence of colonialism and Christianity.

During *ulwaluko*, the young man is circumcised and this traditionally took place in the bush where the young initiate would be isolated until he had healed from the wound. Part of the process involves the young men being taught about certain aspects of 'manhood'. Thereafter, he would be released to go home, where a welcoming party (*umgidi*) would be held to celebrate his new status. The young initiate would be given further guidelines on how to behave in a manner befitting his new status. Presently, this practice is highly contested mainly due to large numbers of the initiates dying in the bush from dehydration and others having to have their private parts amputated (Goniwe, 1999; Mgqolozana, 2004; Tshemese, 2012). Other contestations are around the notion of 'manhood', with some contending that going to the bush to be circumcised is but one way of acquiring 'manhood', thus preferring not to undergo circumcision (Goniwe, 1999; Mgqolozana, 2004; Ntozini, 2011). As a result of the health risks attached to *ulwaluko*, some prefer to have the circumcision done at a hospital, thus having to put up with the stigma of not going to the bush and being labelled as 'less than a real man' (Goniwe, 1999; Mgqolozana, 2004), whilst others prefer not to undergo circumcision at all.

*Intonjane* traditionally entailed putting the young girl who had reached puberty in seclusion for ten days (Delius & Glaser, 2002; Sityana, 1990; Soga, 1934/1984). According to Sityana (1990) and Soga (1934/1984), the rationale was to prepare her for marriage and it was informed by the belief that it would prevent barrenness and miscarriage and any complications related to child birth and her married life. The older women would give her guidelines on how to behave as a woman. At the end of the period, a huge celebration involving slaughtering was held. Nowadays, owing to colonialist influence and the appropriation of cultural practices *intonjane* has been replaced by the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party, signifying adulthood and the freedom that comes with being an adult. *Intonjane* is still practiced in a few areas although there is now a move to resuscitate the practice (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008) as part of the 'African Renaissance'.

*Lobola* in its 'pure' form involved the giving of cattle to the family of the prospective bride. In addition to strengthening ties between the two families as stated above, *lobola* also gave the husband the right over all the children. The cattle would then be used to feed the woman and her children in the event of being widowed (Mostert, 1992; Soga, 1934/1984). The bride's family would state the number of cattle to be given to them, but this was subject to negotiation. The *lobola* had to be paid in full upfront before the bride-to-be was allowed to leave her home, but in some families the transaction could be concluded later (Soga, 1934/1984). *Lobola* is said to bring *isidima* (status, respect and dignity) to the woman and stigma is attached to a woman for whom *lobola* has not been paid (Mandela, 1993; Mostert, 1992). Currently, *lobola* has largely taken the form of money and has been subject to abuse through greed and is also a highly contested practice. Changes in how these practices are carried out indicate their historical specificity. The next section deals with the African beliefs concerning sexuality.

#### *Narratives of 'African belief' and notions of (woman's) sexuality*

Many of the practices and rituals espoused under African culture require women to show sexual propriety and fidelity. In contrast, masculinity is closely linked to the number of women a man has a sexual relationship with, and having many wives is regarded as a status symbol (Bongela, 2001; Mandela, 1993). As a result, women's sexuality is regulated. An example of traditional isiXhosa custom used in the regulation of women's and men's sexuality before marriage is *ukumetsha* / intercrural sex (non-penetrative sex between the thighs of girls), because full intercourse before marriage is regarded as taboo. In addition, *ukuhlola* /virginity testing is conducted on women to prevent premarital sexual activity from resulting in pregnancies. Virginity testing involves an examination of the vagina to see whether or not the hymen is intact as proof of chastity. There is a lot of controversy and debate regarding virginity testing, mainly around the question of whether or not it infringes upon women's human rights (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001). The Human Rights and Gender commissions are strongly opposed to virginity testing as they view it as a violation of human rights such as the right to privacy and bodily integrity, and as a form of discrimination. In addition, the issue of the hymen as a reliable indicator of sexual virginity has been

raised, due to medical evidence that a girl may have been born without a hymen, or the fact that it could have been ruptured during normal physical activity, sport, or through the use of tampons (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001). When a girl is discovered to have engaged in penetrative sex during such testing, she is ostracised by the other girls in her village (Delius & Glaser, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2001; Sityana, 1990). However, a young man who has multiple partners is praised for being ‘*ulewu*’/ a ‘player’ and this is something other young men aspire to (Sityana, 1990; Wood & Jewkes, 2005). The aspect of men taking up multiple sexual partners is addressed in the analysis section when discussing the ‘male sexual drive discourse’ (MSD).

When a woman gets married, her sexuality is regulated by an imposed dress code: she must wear a long dress, waist band and head scarf which identify her as belonging exclusively to her husband (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008). According to Gcingca-Ndolo (2008), this serves to deter other men from looking at her in a suggestive manner. This objectification of women through visibility is taken up in the analysis chapter as it is continued even after the husband’s death.

Furthermore, in traditional African ‘culture’, and isiXhosa cosmology women are regarded as impure during certain periods, in particular during menstruation, pregnancy, miscarriage, breastfeeding and death of her husband (Carton, 2006; Hirst, 2005; Mostert, 1992; Pauw, 1975; Soga 1937/89). Due to these “times of womanhood” (Pauw, 1990, p. 83) manifesting in relation to female sexuality, her mourning is made more restrictive as mourning is also regarded as highly polluting (Hirst, 2005; Pauw, 1975; Pauw, 1990). Crossing the tracks of the bereaved person (the tracks of a person are referred to as *umkhondo* in isiXhosa), is also viewed as polluting, not only to people but also to animals and crops (Bongela, 2001; Hirst, 2005; Mostert, 1992; Pauw, 1990; Soga, 1937/89). It is believed that the cows will miscarry and the crops will die (Soga, 1937/89). The kraal is regarded as ‘the domain of the man’ and a revered space inhabited by the ancestors and women are thus prohibited from entering it. In the following section, a closer look at how the complex cultural interactions between the Africans and the Westerners impacted on the indigenous African practices is undertaken.

### *Colonialist infiltration and hybridity*

The impact of Western ‘culture’ through colonialism and Christianity has brought about hybridized ways of doing things, whereby both indigenous cultural practices and Western practices have blended (Bongela, 2001; Dougan, 2004; Mayer & Mayer, 1994; Soga, 1937/1989). For example, working away from the homestead implied that one could enjoy increased social and cultural freedom. Since the ancestors were believed to occupy the kraal and the area between the kraal and the homestead *inkundla* (Bongela, 2001), the people could abandon some of the traditional cultural practices and incorporate some of the ‘White person’s ways’ (Mayer & Mayer, 1974) without fear of incurring the wrath of the ancestors. Western beliefs, fuelled by urbanization and Christianity, thus received increasing acceptance by many Africans.

Consequently, these cultural dynamics have resulted in certain indigenous customs and values being done away with through the process of what has been termed ‘acculturation’, whilst others have survived and the majority has been modified to meet the dynamics of social transformation. The use of ‘acculturation’ in quotes is an acknowledgement of its discursive use. Acculturation is mostly used as something that happens to the colonized whereas both the colonizer and the colonized actually influence each other’s way of life (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Examples of cultural hybridity, the incorporation of the other’s culture, were evident in dress code and belief systems. For example, the AmaXhosa women incorporated the ‘German print’ in their cultural dress, referred to as ‘*umbhaco*’, and complex religious practices emerged as traditional ancestor belief was mixed with Christianity by some. In an endeavour to underscore the multiple belongings of the AmaXhosa and ‘hybridization’, anthropologists Mayer and Mayer (1974, p. 40) had this to say: “The African today can behave in many situations primarily as a tribesman and yet simultaneously be involved in other sets of relations which cut across tribal lines”. This is indicative of the multiplicity and fluidity of their identity brought about by being a member of several places: rural, peri-urban and urban all at the same time. Colonialism and subsequent urbanization also brought about the widening of location issues among the AmaXhosa along education lines, class, and religion, mixing of Christian and African traditions and strict adherence to traditional ancestor-focused religious practices by those who resisted change.

The arrival of colonialists brought about a Red – School divide among the AmaXhosa. The ‘Red’ people were referred to as such due to their smearing of red ochre on their clothes and bodies, wearing beads and brass ornaments on their necks, arms and legs, and refusing to accept the “White man’s religion” (Mayer & Mayer, 1974, p. 22) and schooling. They were thus illiterate (Mda, 2000). They chose to call themselves “Unbelievers” and were proud of it (Mda, 2000, p. 3). The ‘School’ people were influenced by missionaries, attended school and church; and wore European style clothes. However, according to Delius and Glaser (2002), the distinctiveness of these groupings has been rendered problematic by some scholars who view these categories as less defined and dynamic rather than fixed. All these factors also produced complexities arising from the contestation between ‘indigenous’ and ‘western’ expressions of cultural practices as well as new forms of practice resulting from mixing of these. Spousal mourning has not been an exception.

The above sections focused on the Eastern Cape context of the study, covering such aspects as their socio-political system, socio-economic system, socio-cultural system, traditional African ‘belief systems’ and perceptions of sexuality. The following paragraphs examine the notion of family and traditional marriage among the AmaXhosa; and these are central to how spousal mourning is viewed.

#### *‘Family’, hlonipha and marriage among the AmaXhosa*

Writing on African marriages, Mbithi (1969, p. 133) has observed that “Marriage is a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects which overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated from one another”. The following paragraphs outline the procedure of marriage among the AmaXhosa.

Despite the fact that the marriage process has undergone changes due to colonialism, such as the introduction of civil marriages, it has remained fairly stable (Olivier, Bekker, Olivier (Jnr) & Olivier, 1995). When a man wants to get married, a delegation from his family is sent to the family of the bride-to-be in order to ask for her hand in marriage. This step is known as *ukucela* (asking) and it marks the beginning of the marriage negotiations. For this reason, marriage, which is

considered as a joining together of two individuals, turns out to be a social agreement between two extended families. This agreement is brought about through a complex series of customary negotiations, arrangements and transactions designed to strengthen the relationship, such as ‘payment’ of *lobola* variously referred to as bride wealth, bride gift and bride ‘price’ from the groom’s family to the bride’s family (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1994; Soga, 1937/1989; Solomon, 1986).

It is important to note here that *lobola* was not viewed as a ‘payment’ as the AmaXhosa cultural custodians were of the view that one would never be in a position to place value on a human being due to the possession of a soul (Mostert, 1992), but outsiders have mistakenly labelled it as such and this has created a lot of contradictions in its practice. Furthermore, the exchange of gifts is done by both families. Traditionally, *lobola* was meant for the man to show his ability as an adult to build a homestead and look after the wife (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1994; Soga, 1937/1989; Solomon, 1986). Furthermore, a man who paid a lot of *lobola* was regarded with dignity and comments by the community would be made to the effect that he had “*lobolad* and did not play” (Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008, p. 135). Traditionally, *lobola* was strictly in terms of livestock such as cattle, horses and sheep (Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008) but due to changes brought about by colonial infiltration; *lobola* is now paid mostly in monetary terms. Once the *lobola* process was completed, the bride was then taken to the groom’s homestead. In the past, *lobola* was shared among the male relatives of the women who undertook to be responsible for her in the event of the husband’s death, and therefore, did not go exclusively to the father (Mostert, 1992; Sityana, 1990).

This aspect of the process is known as *ukwenda*, which loosely translated means being married off. Furthermore, it is made clear that you are “married to the homestead” (Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008, p. 109; Mayer & Mayer, 1994, p. 216) that is, to the people of that homestead who are comprised of the mother-in-law, father-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, father-in-law’s kin and the village people. A celebration is held to receive the bride in the groom’s family, culminating in a special session called *ukuyala*, loosely translated as admonishing and giving counsel to the couple, focusing mainly on the bride. The focus is mainly on the woman because of her outsider

position in the new family environment and the session is partly meant to familiarize the stranger with how things are done in the new environment. It is emphasized that she must be a 'dignified woman' (*umfazi onesidima*), who respects her husband. Ngcongco (1993) outlines the qualities of a dignified woman as per 'African culture' as not arguing with her husband or desiring equality with him as that might result in arguments. Furthermore, she is discouraged from wanting access to the kind of benefits or pleasures that he has, such as having multiple partners and not reporting his whereabouts to his wife, which are both regarded as part of his cultural privilege. The married woman must also recognize it as her husband's privilege to make the most important decisions in the family, as the head of the family. The position of 'head' with reference to the man is further discussed in the 'familial-ukwenda' discourse in Chapter 7.

The bride now acquires a new name as a newlywed woman (*makoti*) or *mendi*, meaning 'one who is married' and is also given another name by which she will be called, in place of her maiden first name. This new name authenticates her marriage status as refusal by the family to name her means that she is not accepted (Sityana, 1990). This usually happens when the bridegroom takes a wife without the family's approval.

In addition, she is made visible through special clothing such as a long dress which must cover the ankles, a waist band, a head scarf and a blanket. The visibility of the married woman through wearing of dresses covering the ankles and covering the hair with a headscarf is one way in which the woman's sexuality is regulated among the AmaXhosa. For example, now that she is married, other men should not see her beautiful legs, arms and hair, lest they appreciate and lust after her, which is regarded as her husband's privilege only (Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008). Failure to show respect by adhering to these requirements and restrictions as expected puts her family of origin in a bad light. This aspect of visibility of the married woman is taken up in the analysis chapters which focus on her visibility when the husband has died.

This section has highlighted the focus of 'family' and marriage among the AmaXhosa on the married woman as an outsider. Her outsider status is endorsed by her visibility. For example, married women are required to wear a head covering and

long dresses. This kind of visibility could be viewed as a form of cultural control linked to the cultural aspects of *ukwenda* and *hlonipha* (respect). *Hlonipha* (respect) is hailed as one of the key components of the indigenous culture of the AmaXhosa (Bongela, 2001). It is conferred on the basis of gender, age and status. Men in general are to be respected by women. The younger generation is expected to show respect to the elders by prefixing their names with *mama* (mother), *bhuti* (brother), *sisi* (sister) and *tata* (father). People from royal family are also shown respect regardless of age. *Hlonipha* (respect) is a multifaceted concept that is demonstrated in various ways such as avoidance of certain spaces, food and names. Places such as the kraal, the space between the kraal and the huts (*inkundla*) and graves of chiefs are regarded as the resting place of ancestors and therefore, sacred (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008). Consequently, women are cautioned to keep away from them as a sign of respect. *Hlonipha* (respect) is discussed further in Chapter 7 as one of the discourses employed in the differential construction of spousal mourning for men and women. This section also drew attention to the communal life of the AmaXhosa, particularly with respect to the married woman who is ‘married to the homestead’.

The context section has offered insights into the context of the study, giving the reader a historical introduction to the socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political context of the study, including constructions of the belief system of the participants, their political system prior to colonial invasion, issues of sexuality, and the consequences of colonialist infiltration. It has also provided the reader with a glimpse of how relationships between men and women are structured in the context of family and marriage. It is hoped that the reader who may not be knowledgeable about the AmaXhosa (the specific cultural group whose mourning practice is examined) and the Eastern Cape, their indigenous area of domicile, will get an understanding of the context of the research. In the following section, the various chapters that constitute this research are outlined.

## ORDER OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth description of the theoretical framework underlying the research. The theoretical framework adopted is postcolonial feminism, drawing on poststructuralism. The chapter starts off by introducing the issues facing ‘Western’/

'First World' feminism which eventually led to the formation of other feminisms, including postcolonial feminism. It then elaborates on postcolonial feminism highlighting its theoretical concerns for representation, location(ality), issues of multiplicity, hybridity, diversity, contingency and power etc., including how the current research could be best looked at through its lens. Finally, the chapter expounds on poststructuralism and its link with postcolonial feminism, specifically focusing on Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power, visibility and surveillance and on positioning theory as propounded by Davis and Harré (1990).

Chapter 3 provides a review of academic literature on the topic of mourning, both globally and in South Africa. It starts by defining the key terminology, distinguishing between bereavement, grief and mourning. It covers various understandings of mourning, for example, those focusing intrapsychically, such as grief theories which view grief as work (Freud 1917/84), in terms of phases or stages (Bowlby, 1960; Kubler-Ross, 1969), tasks (Worden, 1991) and processes (Rando, 1993, in Corr et al., 1997). It also covers those which centre their attention on the culturally informed expressions of mourning, for example, anthropological and cultural-psychological research on mourning in Africa and South Africa.

This is followed by Chapter 4 in which the concept of 'culture' is examined. It explores the concept of 'culture' from various perspectives such as mainstream psychology, cross-cultural psychology and cultural psychology. This is done by exploring the various notions of culture and how it has been used in Psychology and in theorizing about mourning. It also covers various conceptualizations of culture as static, as fluid, as material artefacts and the ideational view of culture. Contestations of culture range from the 'universalist' notions of culture, to those that take the relativist route of culture as a meaning making process. 'Universalist' notions of culture equate 'culture' to a veneer under which the core of human nature is encased and therefore seek to uncover the 'superficial differences' in order to reach the real person underneath (Shweder, 1999). 'Universalist' notions of culture thus ignore the social dimension and would theorize mourning as 'grief work', a perspective that the experience of grief is the same regardless of cultural context. In contrast, relativist notions of culture view it as an integral part of human nature and would thus acknowledge the importance of the specificities and particularities of the people's

culture when theorizing about mourning. In line with the theoretical framework of this study, my understanding of culture as a construction, and thus subject to construction and reconstruction is explained. This understanding thus calls for attention to be paid to cultural specificities and particularities.

Chapter 4 is followed by the presentation of the methodology adopted in conducting the research. Chapter 5 begins by outlining the central questions posed in this research. This is followed by a discussion around discourse analysis, and thematic analysis, the methodologies utilized by the study to analyze text emanating from discussions of spousal mourning. Thereafter, the various conceptualizations of discourse are outlined, followed by a section on reflexivity, a practice that forms an important part of discourse analytic and feminist research. A key principle of reflexivity concerns an exploration of the researcher's role in the research process and the consequences thereof. Data collection methods as well as data analysis are then outlined. Data were gathered through focus group discussions and personal interviews with widows and widowers, as well as with key cultural informants. Data analysis involved adopting Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, as well as Parker's (1992, p. 7) approach to discourse analysis which draws on the work of Foucault. The analysis was infused with theoretical insights which draw on postcolonial feminism, discourses on sexuality identified by Hollway (1984), Foucault's (1991) work on surveillance (disciplinary power) and Davis and Harré's (1990) positioning theory.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are the key chapters of data analysis. Chapter 6 focuses on the discussion of how the participants constructed spousal mourning for men and for women and the explanations offered for such constructions. It contains complex and contradictory intricacies of claims as to what spousal mourning is and what it is not. Central to the constructions of spousal mourning was the issue of visibility, the imperative to show one's mourner status through a marker. However, this issue was highly contested. The chapter also looks at the resistance strategies employed by women pertaining to the constructions. Chapter 7 analyses current constructions of how spousal mourning was practiced in the past as well as current constructions of historical circumstances and how they affected mourning. The focus is on how people understand what happened in the past and how this ties with their current talk

on spousal mourning. One of the significant features of spousal mourning that emerged from the section on current constructions of spousal mourning was visibility through the wearing of special mourning clothes. Transformations have occurred and continue to do so with respect to this aspect of spousal mourning. This turned out to be infused with gender power relations, the spotlight being on women's visibility. Changes in the practice of spousal mourning in its indigenous form with respect to the wearing of special mourning clothes, 'hiding' versus movement and length of mourning period are examined. In Chapter 8, the discourses that mediated the constructions of how the participants understood the differential treatment are identified and explored. The discourses were strongly informed by the distinction between gender categories and were thus not neutral. They included the familial-*'ukwenda'* discourse, male sexual drive discourse, respect-*'hlonipha'* discourse and religious discourse. In addition to identifying and exploring discourses from which the constructions draw, this chapter also considers the positioning/s made available by these discourses for both men and women. In view of the fact that these positions entail differential access to power, the extent to which certain possibilities for action are opened up or closed down within each 'subject position' is explored.

The final chapter is devoted to summarizing the main findings of the study, especially in relation to the research questions posed. Furthermore, the chapter makes conclusions concerning the issue of continued visibility of the widow in spite of the objections and concerns raised, and these are intricately tied to culture, its regulatory function and the family. It also links the study with similar studies undertaken elsewhere and identifies chains of equivalence with them. The chapter ends off by summarizing the contributions of the current research in mourning, pointing out the limitations of this research and making suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework adopted in this research, namely, postcolonial feminism (PCF), drawing on poststructuralism. In line with ‘cultural psychology’, the view of ‘culture’ espoused in this thesis is that ‘culture is non-static, context specific and multiple’. Postcolonial feminism regards cultural practices as contingent, complex and multiple. This theoretical framework was utilized to shed light on the multiplicities, specificities, complexities, contradictions and power issues around *ukuzila* (spousal mourning) informed by the multiple subject positionings of both men and women participants arising from various axes of differentiation. In this study, diversity and multiplicity of men and women’s subject positionings was evident in their different takes on the contentious issue of widow’s visibility. Some men and women were in support of visibility while others were against it. The people under study, namely, the AmaXhosa are a heterogeneous group characterised by all those who speak various dialects of the language isiXhosa, and who belong to various sub-ethnic groups such as AmaMfengu, AmaBhaca, AmaGcaleka, AmaMpondo, and AmaBomvana (Bongela, 2001; Mandela, 1993). Their diversity is also centred on their varying belief systems (see ‘AmaXhosa belief system’ in the introductory chapter), rural-urban divide, age, class, gender and socio-economic status. This chapter also covers the key theoretical concepts of hybridity, power relations, representation and location(ality), power and resistance, visibility and surveillance and positioning theory.

Before the chosen theoretical framework is elaborated on, its precursors will briefly be introduced. This section provides the rationale for the use of the particular theoretical concepts that underpin this thesis. The issues facing ‘Western’/ ‘First World’ feminisms will be outlined. This will be followed by a section that deals with the complexities of theorising gender in Africa. Thereafter, postcolonialism will be explored, highlighting its marginalisation of gender, which provided the context in which PCF emerged. Finally, poststructuralism and its link with PCF will be

explicated. The theoretical framework, PCF, will be elaborated on, highlighting its theoretical concerns for representation, location(ality) and issues of multiplicity, diversity, power and context specificity, including how the current research could be best looked at through its lens. For instance, Macleod (2000) raises concerns about the degree to which Western or 'First World' feminists are capable addressing problems encountered by women in 'Third World' countries due to the differences in their location(ality). Key theoretical concepts underpinning the research will be discussed, specifically focusing on Bhabha's notion of hybridity; power relations, power and resistance, visibility and surveillance, and Hollway's and Davis and Harré's positioning theory. These will be used to shed light on the analysis of the data. For example, positioning theory will be used to shed light on the subject positions emanating from the discourses identified as mediating the constructions of spousal mourning.

#### 'WESTERN' / 'FIRST WORLD' FEMINISM(S)

The title of this section is 'Western'/'First World' feminisms for a number of reasons. The use of plural in 'Western'/'First World' feminism(s) acknowledges the existence of plurality in 'Western'/'First World' feminisms, each with its own orientation. The use of 'Western feminism' would thus gloss over this diversity, and the debates between the various strands of feminisms that have established themselves in 'Western' countries (Mann & Hoffman, 2005). Feminism has developed over time, consisting of various strands and has been beset with contestations thus making it difficult to define. Furthermore, the retention of the quotations marks is in recognition of the fact that 'Western' / 'First World' and 'Third World' are not transparent and stable terms, but are socially constructed and therefore subject to historical contingency. Additionally, they lump together diverse countries and regions, thus failing to address the diversity between them.

The mission of the first wave of 'Western' / 'First World' feminism in the United Kingdom and in the United States, established around 1918, was the emancipation of women, particularly focusing on the right of women to vote (Beasley, 1999). Furthermore, equality with men, and participation in the public sphere of politics was highlighted (Beasley, 1999). This resulted in the establishment of gender equity laws

and, subsequently, the purported provision of equality of opportunity in the spheres of education, healthcare, professions and in the workplace (Hughes, 2002).

The second wave, established in the early 1960s, was more focused on women's oppression as women and undertook to end sex discrimination and promote equal opportunities (Baxter, 2003). Second wave feminism thus focused on the global oppression of women. In other words, all women were regarded as similarly oppressed due to belonging to the category 'woman', regardless of other factors that could intersect with this kind of oppression, such as race, religion and class (to mention a few)

This notion of universal sisterhood proved problematic, however, as globalizing was viewed as excluding the specificity of black women's experiences whilst universalizing others (Lewis, 2000). Black and 'Third World' women felt that the globalizing of 'woman's identity' was inadequate and responded by drawing attention to areas of diversity among women. They put emphasis on "multiple differences, complex diversities and location(ality) arising from issues of cultural hybridity" (Hughes, 2002, p. 76). Thus third wave feminism(s) emerged in order to configure the feminist movement such that it would embrace the diversity within and between women and be more inclusive (Mann & Huffman, 2005).

In addition to the waves of feminism, various forms of feminism have developed in the West. These include liberal feminism, socialist feminism, standpoint feminism, radical feminism and more recently, poststructural feminism. Liberal feminism's main focus is on equality between men and women, especially in the political and economic spheres (Cornwall, 2005). As a result, legislative changes which grant equality between men and women have been effected. In contrast, radical feminism puts emphasis on patriarchy as the source of women's oppression (Hughes, 2002). Consequently, the aim of radical feminism is to overthrow patriarchy by contesting standard gender roles and the oppression of women (Cornwall, 2005). Furthermore, radical feminism asserts that women's oppression is present regardless of whether the society is capitalist or socialist, communal or individual (Kiguwa, 2004). Socialist feminists locate the cause of women's oppression in the capitalist system, and assert that the solution is the overthrow of capitalism. However, contemporary socialist

feminists have highlighted the interrelatedness of race, class and sexuality (Kiguwa, 2004). Poststructural feminism puts emphasis on the non-universality of women's experience, which is regarded as being shaped by multiple socio-cultural differences (Hughes, 2002; Kiguwa, 2004). Thus, women's oppression is viewed as intersecting with other axes of differentiation. Poststructural feminism undertakes to explore culturally constructed gendered power relations, and also seeks ways to resist them. These various forms of feminism point to the plural nature of feminism.

Mills (2002) asserts that third wave feminism includes the range of theories based on constructionist rather than essentialist principles, examples of such theories being social constructionism, postmodernism, feminist postcolonial theory and poststructural feminism. Mills (as cited in Baxter, 2003, p.5) has delineated the following aspects as linked to third wave feminism:

- the diversity and multiplicity of women's identities,
- a focus on context specific gender issues rather than more generalized questions,
- the importance of co-construction, the process by which identities are negotiated and constructed through social constructions,
- the notion of power constructed not as a possession, but as flowing omnidirectionally in a net or web-like fashion, such that powerlessness is no longer considered a feature of all women,
- powerlessness may pertain to many women some of the time or to a minority of women most of the time,
- an emphasis upon notions of female resistance to, and a reinterpretation of, stereotyped subject positions rather than notions of struggle against the subordination of women.

Consequently, she promotes "developing feminist frameworks that build solidarity between women across difference" (Mills as cited in Baxter, 2003, p.5), based on the connections and commonalities, whilst recognizing the importance of diversity and difference between women.

The principles highlighted above have resonance with the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis. They are elaborated upon more fully in a later section. The

following section looks at some of the criticism that has been levelled against ‘Western’ / ‘First World’ feminisms.

### *Critiques of ‘Western’ / ‘First World’ feminism/s*

Foremost amongst the criticism of ‘Western’ / ‘First World’ feminisms was the treatment of women as a homogenous oppressed group. Western feminists mobilized in the past (and still, to some extent) utilise the ‘unifying’ banner of a shared oppression thus assuming both a “cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy” (Mohanty, 1991, p. 53) instead of different forms of patriarchy, each with its specific effects (Macleod, 2000). By treating women as a homogenous oppressed group, ‘Western’ / ‘First World’ feminists neglected the specific concerns and interests of non-Western women. They, therefore, downplayed differences among women such as the interlocking of patriarchy with other dimensions of difference and oppression such as race, class, imperialism, caste, religion, age, ‘culture’, ethnicity, poverty, illiteracy, regional status and rural-urban divisions (Boehmer, 2005; Bryson, 1999; Guy-Sheftall, 2003; hooks, 2000; Kawole, 2003; Lorde, 2000).

This emphasis on homogeneity of women as a universally oppressed group excluded the fact that for some women, for example, African women, multiple forms of oppression exist around her simultaneously. For example, an African woman may be oppressed on the basis of her race, class, ethnicity, location within a Third World country, rural-urban divide or sexual orientation (Guy-Sheftall, 2003). Western feminisms were thus perceived as mainly an antisexist struggle, and as marginalising the concerns and interests of non-Western women (Arndt, 2000; Bryson, 1999; Cornwall, 2005; Johnson-Odim, 1991; Kawole, 1997; Kiguwa, 2004; Mohanty, 1999). For ‘Third World’ women, the interlocking of patriarchy with these additional dimensions of oppression means being subjected to diverse forms and levels of patriarchy in which they emerge as the worst victims of the sexist oppression (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006; hooks, 2000). ‘Third World’ feminism thus foregrounds the complexities of social identities as well as their plural nature instead of the unitary notions of gender identity.

Hendricks and Lewis (1994, p. 61) have challenged the universalizing of female experience on the grounds that it ignores the gendered nature of identity and the fact that “the gendered social subject is never simply ‘woman’ or ‘man’, but always a gendered subject” with other overlapping identities such as the ones mentioned above.

The overlapping of gender identities with other dimensions of difference thus changes the configuration of ‘Third World’ women’s struggle and oppression, highlighting their heterogeneous experiences, multiplicity of their identities as well as the complexities which characterize their lives (Garrison, 2004; Hendricks & Lewis, 1994). For example, in relation to the death of a husband, some women lose their social and economic status (Cattell, 2003; Sossou, 2002) whereas others, because of their class, have been better off after their spouse’s death due to their inheritance (Guzana, 2004). In addition to experiencing discrimination in relation to class, African women are also at the ‘wrong’ end of global financial policies, the on-going legacy of colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and so forth. This issue has been raised in the context section. Therefore, ‘Third World’ women’s issues need to be examined in depth within the particular social relations in which they occur in order to take care of the internal differences and complexities. Moreover, race, class, ethnicity and religious oppression are viewed as more critical concerns by the majority of non-western women than the “common bond” of shared patriarchy (hooks, 2000; Kiguwa, 2007) and therefore need to be prioritised.

In addition, Western feminism’s failure to pay attention to concerns of women from the ‘Third world’ and their socio-cultural and historical specificities has resulted in Western feminists being labelled as ethnocentric or Eurocentric and guilty of cultural imperialism (Lewis & Mills, 2003; Mohanty, 1991; Rajan & Park, 2000). Whilst most feminists the world over are in agreement regarding the fact that the oppression of women is global, it is not experienced in the same manner across boundaries due to the additional dimensions of difference previously mentioned. Therefore, one cannot universalize women’s experiences. However, even though the view that the second wave overlooked differences among women is extensive, it has been contested by some second wave feminists who are adamant that “issues of race and class were an integral part of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s” (Vogel as cited in Mann & Hoffman, 2005, p. 60).

Another point that was raised in the critique of ‘Western’ / ‘First World’ feminisms was their concentration on exposing the patriarchal nature of the family, in particular the heterosexual couples consisting of a breadwinning husband and homemaking wife with their dependent children. This posed ‘ambivalence’ for Black feminists concerning the recognition that, “whatever inequalities are associated with family life, it is also frequently the source of women’s most meaningful and supportive relationship” (Jackson, 2008, p. 126). They argued that families could be sites of resistance to, and protection from racism rather than a source of oppression (hooks, 1981; Carby, 1982, Bhavnani & Coulson as cited in Jackson, 2008, p. 126). In South Africa during the apartheid years, when some men were incarcerated or were forced to go to exile leaving behind children and wives, the ‘family’ was a great source of help, in spite of the hierarchies that existed and still exist (Ngcongco, 1993). The notion of ‘family’ in African culture is discussed in the context section.

According to Arndt (2000), Cornwall (2005) and Mama (1997), Western feminists’ stance of giving prominence to sexuality and conflict with men, its association with radical feminism and of consequently being perceived as against motherhood, nature and culture; its neglect of African traditions, its fundamental rejection of marriage and a favouring of lesbian love are some of the reasons for its rejection.

In sum, the definitional issues regarding feminism and its agenda resulted in non-Western women feeling left out. This discontent led to the emergence of alternatives to Western feminisms which purported to challenge the bias and usefulness of Western feminism in addressing ‘Third World’ women’s issues. In the following paragraphs the complexities of theorising gender in Africa are outlined.

#### THE COMPLEXITIES OF THEORISING GENDER IN AFRICA

The complexities of theorising gender in Africa arise from a number of sources. Firstly, various strands of feminism/s (gender theorising) have been developed over time, resulting in feminism/s being beset with contestations thus making the task of theorising gender difficult. Secondly, location(ality) politics have contributed immensely to these complexities. Being a woman in Africa does not translate to

commonality of experience as pointed out in the previous section. There have been debates about difference in local contexts, thus pointing to the multiple forms of oppression on the African continent. For example, whilst some are experiencing very high levels of domestic violence, such as in South Africa, others are experiencing war and war crimes perpetrated against them, such as rape, and others still are dealing with issues of poverty (Guy-Sheftall, 2003).

As indicated in the previous section, non-Western women felt discontent about the inadequate manner in which their concerns were attended to by Western feminists. They believed that it prolonged their victimization and consequently decided that different strategies were needed to address these concerns (Kawole, 1997). However, African women have themselves been divided on how to address these issues of identity. Some assert that African women's resistance and activism against unequal gender relations pre-dates colonization and 'Western'/ 'First World' feminism (Guy-Sheftall, 2003). Whilst some have been content in identifying with the concept of feminism, some have been guarded and some have rejected it. Common among these was the rejection of all forms of oppression including race and class.

Those who were content in being associated with feminism, for example, Busia (as cited in Kolawole, 1997) cited the importance of solidarity, and insisted that feminism should be used by all feminists as a strategy. This group viewed 'African feminism' in a negative light on the basis that it operates on the 'divide and rule' principle, which women should guard against if they want to win the struggle against patriarchy.

The conflation of Western feminism with imperialism in the eyes of particular 'Third world' women brought about a rejection of the term feminism (Ogunyemi as cited in Arndt, 2000). For example, Arndt (2000) viewed the criticism of African gender relations as potentially weakening Africa's struggle against neo-colonialism. Those who rejected the concept of feminism thus chose to abandon the term feminism, arguing in favour of the necessity and expedience of new terms based on identity. Consequently, Alice Walker's 'Womanism', Ogunyemi's 'African womanism', Ogunjipe – Leslie's Social Transformation Including Women in Africa ('Stawinism') and Achonolu's 'Motherism' (Kawole, 1997) were created on the basis that "naming is power" (Ogunyemi, 1985, p. 72, as cited in Arndt, 2000).

Common amongst these approaches is the essentialist position that black women automatically have insight into their experiences by virtue of their socioeconomic, cultural and biological heritage (Garrison, 2004; Hendricks & Lewis, 1994). According to Walker (1983, xi, as cited in Kawole, 1997), who coined the term, ‘womanist’ is a “black feminist or feminist of colour [who is] committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female” and it covers racial, cultural, national, economic and political issues in its philosophy. It thus recognizes the oppression of men by other men and is thus empowering of black men. African womanism was founded on the basis that feminism and African-American womanism overlook African peculiarities (Kawole, 1997). It thus confines itself to African women only and incorporates such forms of oppression as “interethnic skirmishes and cleansing, religious fundamentalism, in-lawism and the oppression of younger by older women” (Ogunyemi, 1997, p. 4 as cited in Kawole, 1997).

Those cautious regarding feminism, such as Johnson Odim (1991) were for a feminism that is comprehensive enough to simultaneously incorporate gender specificity and additional factors that oppress women such as race, class, and imperialism. Using names other than feminism has been problematised on the basis that changing the terminology offers no solution to the problem of global domination (Mama, 2001) and that the universality in women’s oppression that does exist, might be overlooked (Johnson Odim, 1991). Other critics, like Brah (as cited in Hughes, 2002), caution against affirmations of a particular common experience such as Africanness or being female or ethnicity as so doing has the potential of essentializing difference.

The question of essentialising difference has been taken up by a number of scholars. Minh-ha (1987) highlighted the limiting and deceptive nature of characterising difference as uniqueness or special identity due to the fact that it overlooks that identities are constantly in flux, and that culture is dynamic. In the process of essentialising black or African women, class and gender differences might be downplayed and power differences not addressed within given cultures. Lumping together women from the same ethnic group or of similar colour is itself essentialist and ignores their own diversity of political persuasion (Mann & Hoffman, 2005).

Furthermore, as Imam (cited in Cornwall, 2005, p. 4) claims, “resorting to versions of ‘traditional’ culture in defence of an ‘essential Africanity’ leaves African women without the political resources to combat those very aspects of tradition that damage them as women”.

As a way of offering a solution to these complexities, some researchers have underlined the need for solidarity by making alliances and coalitions amongst feminists (Bose, 2005; Mills, 2002; Shefer & Foster, 2001) whilst recognising diversity. The differences among women spell out different concerns among them and the multifaceted nature of the women’s struggle in different contexts. Therefore, dialogue and alliance-making were proposed on points of convergence. However, this has also been highly contested within feminist theories, with some labelling the strategy of dialogue and alliance-making as nomadic (Bradiotti, 1994, 1997).

It is in this context that scholars started to advocate for post-colonial feminism mainly due to the immensely heterogeneous category of ‘Third world’ (albeit being used as a monolithic category), which made it difficult for the ‘African Feminisms’ referred to above to achieve “unity in heterogeneity” (Bose, 2005, p.88). Moreover, the new context of globalization, which has resulted in cross fertilization across national and continental boundaries has introduced political fluidity within ‘African feminism’ (Lewis, 2001). The ‘transnational’ strand within postcolonialism has taken these specificities and multiplicities into consideration (Bose, 2005).

In addition to advocating the formation of alliances, PCF pays special attention to issues of multiplicity and the complexities brought about by these multiplicities. Basically, this entailed addressing issues related to plurality of identity, locality of experience, contingency, specificity as well as multiple resistances. Examples of factors contributing to these multiple identities have been identified as race, culture, age, religion, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, traditions and beliefs (Bose, 2005). In this study, PCF will be employed to examine spousal mourning among the AmaXhosa taking into account that they are not a homogenous group, including the categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ within them. To this end, women and men from various localities in terms of age, belief systems, geographical location (urban-rural divide) and education were utilised as participants in this study. Before we examine

this approach to feminism in depth, a brief exploration of colonialism and neo-colonialism and of post-colonialist theory will be presented, in view of the fact that they have been part of the context in which PCF emerged.

### ***Colonialism, neo-colonialism and women***

Whilst acknowledging the subjugation of women in traditional African societies prior to colonialism, colonialism has been blamed for having reinforced certain aspects of women's subjugation and having added others (Kawole, 1977; Peterson & Rutherford, 1986). Several authors have highlighted the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism on African or non-Western women. Elaborating on the complexities that have been brought about by colonialism, Ogunjipe-Leslie (1994, p.1) characterizes the oppression from colonialism and neo-colonialism as one of the "six mountains on the back of an African woman". Peterson and Rutherford (1986) employ the phrase 'a double colonisation' when describing the simultaneous experience oppression of colonialism and patriarchy by women; Boehmer (2005) refers to women as triply marginalised to refer to the fact women are oppressed by colonialism, race and gender.

The introduction of a cash economy, the infiltration of colonial capitalism together with industrialisation and migrant labour, and the conversion of land to cash crops (with the aim of expatriating surplus to the coloniser's country) eventually led to dependence, as well as the proletarianisation and marginalization of women by changing their indigenous social and economic roles (Kawole, 1997; Mandela, 1993; Parkard, 2009). For example, prior to colonialism, African women worked in the fields to produce food for the family. With the advent of colonialism, when the same land was converted to the production of cash crops that do not produce food for the family, the cash was given to the men and women's roles were marginalised.

As a result, women became more subordinated and male superiority and female exclusion became the norm. After colonialism, this legacy was not altered and so the national states inherited colonial institutes which excluded women especially in the institutional, economic, political spheres (Young, 2003). Therefore, although patriarchy prevailed in pre-colonial culture, colonialism added other forms by

imposing Western norms on the colonized and in the process transformed existing patriarchies (Mohanty, 1991). In so doing, colonialism and patriarchy became mutually supportive. Women were thus subjected to both general discrimination as colonized subjects and specific discrimination as women - 'double colonisation' according to Peterson and Rutherford (1986). For black women in South Africa, it became 'triple colonisation' owing to discrimination on the basis of race. The aforementioned factors, therefore, need to be taken into account when dealing with the effects of colonial oppression.

Religion is another complexity that was introduced by colonialism. For example, the introduction of Islam and Christianity resulted in new patriarchal religious values which prescribed a new subjugated status for women. The introduction of the new religions resulted in some of the converts abandoning their traditional African religions, others mixing the new with the old, with the rest retaining their traditional religions (Bongela, 2001; Hirst, 2005; Mayer & Mayer, 1994; Mostert, 1992; Soga, 1937/89). This added to diversity within the same context. This aspect has been covered in the context section in relation to the AmaXhosa and was raised in the data. Some of the issues raised by non-Western women regarding their discontent with 'Western'/ 'First World' feminism's treatment of their concerns, especially in connection with heterogeneity of experience, were thus a direct result of the legacy of colonialism.

In the wake of colonialism, with the establishment of national sovereignty, postcolonial states still suffered the effects of colonisation economically and culturally. For example, the colonialists still needed labour power and the people from the former colonies were used to supply this cheap labour, the majority of whom were women (Mandela, 1993). Postcolonialism as a theory thus emerged for the purpose of contesting the continued domination of postcolonial states, between the colonizers and the colonized, after formal decolonization (Young, 2003). However, postcolonialism has been charged with neglecting the double colonisation of women, thus acquiring the stigma of being labelled a male-centred field (Macleod, 2000). The male-centredness of postcolonial theory is explored towards the end of the next section on Postcolonialism. The following paragraph provides a short account of the colonialist history of South Africa.

In South Africa, inequalities were generated by both colonialism and apartheid. South Africa was first colonised by the Dutch who settled in the country in 1652. Later on, after a series of wars between the settler groups, the British took over and South Africa became a British colony (Khabela, 1996; MacKinnon, 2003; Mostert, 1992). During this stage, South Africa was characterised by racial domination under white rule. In 1948, white Afrikaner nationalists took power and introduced apartheid, whose policies separated people along racial lines as African, white, coloured and Indian. Apartheid was a form of internal colonialism, in which the white minority subjugated the black majority as the colonised other. With the introduction of apartheid, Africans were further divided along lines of ethnicity and restricted to separate geographical areas called Bantustans, with Transkei being the first in 1976 (Kessel & van Oomen, 2005). This aspect was covered in depth in the context chapter in the section dealing with the socio-political context. In terms of experiencing women's subjugation, therefore, black women's experience was different from that of white women. The former experienced subjugation in terms of gender and race, in addition to other axis of differentiation due to the implementation of apartheid policy and the Bantustans.

### ***Postcolonialist theory***

Postcolonial theory is a slippery term encompassing various approaches, practices, ideas and interests. It includes, under one rubric, diverse critical approaches, which deconstruct Western thought in many areas such as philosophy, history, literary studies, anthropology, sociology and political science (Mongia, 1996). One of the key issues dealt with in post-colonialism as a theory is 'culture', and this is taken up further in Chapter 4.

According to Young (2003), postcolonialism names a theoretical and political position whose central project is to expose and shift all power imbalances emanating from the colonization process in order to create a more just and equitable relationship between the West and the various people of the world. It is therefore concerned with calling into question colonial and postcolonial issues. One of the key issues dealt with in postcolonial theory is culture, and this aspect is taken up in Chapter 4.

Part of the project of postcolonial theory includes the recognition of the link between knowledge and power. For example, Williams and Chrisman (1994) draw attention to the fact that because of their power, the colonizers examined the colonized and claimed to have produced certain knowledge about them. As a result, other (the colonized) forms of knowing are marginalized by Western thinkers labelling them as myth or folklore (Spivak, 1988). Postcolonial theory thus endeavours to understand the power and continued dominance of Western (colonizer) ways of knowing. Recognizing the knowledge-power link, the postcolonial project thus endeavours to retrieve and bring to the fore the formerly subjugated knowledges of the postcolonial states as part of the strategy to equalize power (Young, 2003).

The work of postcolonial scholars such as Bhabha (1994) and Said (1978) who have contributed to the exposure of power imbalances resulting from colonialism is utilised in this study. This research made use of Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity which is discussed below. Said (1988), in his examination of the notion of Orientalism as a discourse draws on Foucault's poststructuralist conceptions of discourse and knowledge/power relationship.

In view of the fact that postcolonialist theory embraces various approaches, it is a contested term, permeated with differing interpretations and definitions. Some of the contestation has to do with the meaning of the 'post' in postcolonial theory. Whilst some use 'post' to refer to the chronological period after colonialism, others imply that which is resistant to colonialism thus highlighting the political nature of the term (Duncan, 2002; Hughes, 2002; Mongia, 1996; Williams & Chrisman 1994; Young, 2003). Others prefer the term decolonial to emphasize that we are not past (post) colonial (for example Smith, 1999). Therefore, for some it has much more to do with power constructs than with linear time.

The bone of contention concerning the use of 'post' to indicate the periodization of postcolonialism is that it may exclude the political edge as not all writing produced after decolonization is politically resistant (Hughes, 2002). Furthermore, using 'post' as a historical marker of the period after colonization has the misleading notion of an end to power imbalances, thus masking their continuity (Young, 2003). However, this is not the case, as Macleod and Bhatia (2008) assert that current power relations are embedded in colonial history. Therefore, the periodisation of the term needs to be

critically employed to avoid assuming equality. In this research, current constructions of historical renditions of spousal mourning are explored with the view to investigating how these might be used to justify current understandings and power relations. With respect to the political nature of 'post', those using it thus, highlight the power imbalances and focus on the continuing effects of colonization after its official termination, for example, Bhabha (1996).

According to Peterson and Rutherford (1986, p. 9), "colonialism celebrates male achievement in a series of male-oriented myths such as mateship, explorers, freedom fighters, bushrangers, missionaries". Consequently, national liberation movements, in pursuing resistance against colonialism and neo-colonialism regarded gender as secondary. In many post-colonial states, gender inequality was not picked up as an issue requiring serious attention, thus reinforcing the domination of men over women (Schutte, 2005). In others, power imbalances pertaining to gender were acknowledged but without paying sufficient attention to these imbalances.

This, coupled with the concern that postcolonial theory has tended to marginalize gender differences whilst focusing on 'the colonized' (read men), has resulted in postcolonial theory being seen as complicit with patriarchy in oppressing women (Mama, 2001, Peterson & Rutherford, 1986; Schutte, 2005). It is in this context that postcolonial feminism emerged and in the following section this theoretical framework is discussed.

#### POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM

Rajan and Park (2001, p.53) define postcolonial feminism as "an exploration of the intersection of colonialism and neo-colonialism with gender, nation, class, age, race and sexualities and rights in the context of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights." This takes into account that "every colonial encounter or 'contact zone' is different and each 'post-colonial' occasion needs to be precisely located and analyzed for its specific interplay" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2003, p. 156). Postcolonial feminism thus takes cognisance of differences between women, brings these to the centre and entreats 'First World' feminists do likewise. This

project results in the recognition of complexities and contradictions regarding the ‘Third World’, which were ignored by ‘Western Feminism’.

It is important to note that there is no unified postcolonial feminism. Instead, postcolonial feminists take up different theoretical positions. However, commonalities among various theorists include consensus on criticizing the universalizing of women’s oppression by Western feminisms and the inattention to issues of gender in mainstream postcolonial thought (Cornwall, 2005; Young, 2003). They also share the common goal of redressing the question of voicelessness, marginality, oppression and self-retrieval of ‘Third World’ women (Rajan & Park, 2001). Postcolonial feminism works closely with postcolonialism and has a special interest in exploring and analyzing the issues and concerns of being a woman in a postcolonialist setting (Schutte, 2001). For example, postcolonial feminism emphasizes the heterogeneous manner in which colonialism impacted cultures due to their diverse and extensive differences and the need therefore to treat them in their specificities and particularities (such as race, class, nation, sexualities, religion and location in relation to gender) (Ashcroft et al., 2003). Consequently, postcolonial feminism examines oppression from a broader theoretical platform which takes into account the local cultural specificities.

However, Macleod and Bhatia (2008) caution against “slipping into micro-level analyses only” (p. 3). An evaluation of how social inequalities are located and constructed within a political, historical, cultural and economic context as well as how subservience interlocks with patriarchy, traditionalism and modernity in affecting the everyday lives of people of the non-West is consequently undertaken (Young, 2003). Thus the prioritization of patriarchy pertaining to oppression is not regarded as the primary point of focus. Postcolonial feminism therefore seeks to engage itself in the analysis of these complex social relations, especially of gender relations which is seen as lacking from mainstream postcolonialism. In this research, postcolonialism was utilized to shed light on the complexities around ‘*ukuzila*’ informed by the multiple subject positions of both men and women (the participants) as well as their location. The following section provides link of postcolonial feminism with poststructuralism on which it draws.

## POSTSTRUCTURALISM

As indicated earlier, this study is utilising PCF, drawing on poststructuralism. Literature has revealed the differential treatment of men and women in spousal mourning (see further discussion on chapter 3). Power relations centred on gender were at the fore of this differential treatment. In addition, the various forms that the practice has taken over time have been highlighted, thus pointing to its historical contingency. It has already been emphasized that situations do not affect women in the same way due to their diversity upon such lines as age, class, sexuality, religion (dis)ability, socio-economic status and so forth.

Post structuralism proposes a useful, productive framework for understanding the workings of power in society and the possibility for change (Weedon, 1997) and is thus suited to the agenda of postcolonial feminism. The work of Foucault on relations of power, visibility and on sexuality has been taken up by researchers in South Africa and also holds specific relevance for spousal mourning. Foucault's analyses have been employed in South Africa by researchers who are feminists, for example, Macleod (1999) on teenage pregnancy, Shefer (2001) on heterosexual relationships and Wilbraham (2004) on sex communication between teenagers and parents. Macleod (2008) has outlined the theoretical and ideological links between poststructuralism, postcolonial feminism and Foucault as:

- the exposure and contestation of systems of domination, with a common concern with sexuality as a key area of political struggle
- the undermining of practices and representations that validate points of subordination
- the use of these points of fracture to draw attention to absences and silences, and
- the deconstruction of the self-other binary through identity.

Underlying poststructuralism is the centrality of language in constructing meanings which are culturally and historically specific, as well as the embeddedness of power in language (Weedon, 1987). Poststructuralism is, therefore, a useful theoretical resource as it shares the same link with postcolonialism of paying special attention to power relations, issues of social and historical contingency and emphasis on multiple

differences (along the lines outlined above) and complex diversities and locationality arising from issues of cultural hybridity (Hughes, 2002). This research draws on these poststructural understandings.

As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, this thesis utilized Foucault's concepts of power and visibility, and drew on Foucault's (1991) work on surveillance and Davies and Harre's (1990) and van Langenhove and Harre's (1999) positioning theory in order to help illuminate the analysis. Despite the fact that some tensions between feminism and Foucault's brand of poststructuralism exist, there are also some affinities.

The major critique of Foucault's work has been on his relativist stance regarding truth which does not allow for a utopian project like feminism (McNay, 1992). His relativist stance has been interpreted by feminists as a form of retreat from politics and as "depoliticisation of feminism" (Moi, 1985 cited in McNay, 1992, p. 2). Foucault's refusal to delineate criteria or value judgements has been viewed as a subversion of feminist politics which seek to squash the subordination of women (McNay, 1992). For feminists to achieve this project, norms or value judgements are needed to provide guidance for criticising structures of domination. Therefore, Foucault's "relativist resignation reinforces the status quo" (Hawksworth, cited in Macleod, 1999, p. 45). However, those who are in defence of Foucault argue that those who accuse Foucault of relativism do so from a non-poststructuralist position, which is different from how poststructuralism views relativism (Hekman, cited in Macleod, 1999). According to Macleod (1999, p. 48), relativism in structuralism is conceived of as "giving up all notions of truth/falsity and rationality", and therefore as an evil to be shunned, whereas poststructuralism views knowledge as always contextual and historical, thus collapsing the absolute/relative binary.

Feminists have also criticised Foucault's notion of power as everywhere and as constitutive of individuals. Foucault's conception of power as constitutive of individuals, and therefore as producing docile bodies is found wanting in as far as it renders resistance of power by docile bodies impossible (Fraser, 1989 cited in McNay, 1992; Deveaux, 1999). Furthermore, his notion of power as everywhere has been criticised on the basis that it makes it impossible to distinguish between

acceptable and unacceptable forms of power. Those who have come to Foucault's defence regarding the criticism of his notion of power have cited the fact that in his later works he modified it, for example, through his introduction of technologies of self (Deveaux, 1999). Through the notion of technologies of self, Foucault asserts the ability of persons to resist and challenge structures of domination in society, and actively shape their own identities (McNay, 1992; Deveaux, 1999). "This enables Foucault to explain how individuals may escape the homogenic tendencies of power in modern society through the assertion of their autonomy" (McNay, 1992, p. 4)

Other feminists have found resonance with their critique of essentialism in his idea of sexuality as culturally constructed rather than biologically determined (Macleod, 2008). Whilst acknowledging his shortcomings, other feminists have viewed his work in a fairly positive manner (Macleod, 2008) and incorporated it in their work. These have included his insights on power, the body and sexuality. Some feminists have appropriated his earlier work on the effects of power on the body to describe contemporary practices of femininity (Deveaux, 1999). In terms of this appropriation, these feminists have underscored the mechanisms by which women's bodies are controlled and regulated. Women are involved in the enterprise of self-surveillance to ensure 'femininity', for example, by acting on their bodies in such disciplinary practices as exercising regularly, dieting and putting on 'make up' in order to fit a certain image of a woman who is desirable to men (Bartky, 1988). In this way, these feminists have revealed how some women collude with patriarchal standards of femininity.

Feminists have also appropriated Foucault's work on sexual identities as constituted by regulatory practices rather than fixed. Butler, 1990 (in Deveaux, 1999, p. 247) has invoked Foucault to propose a different way of conceptualising gender and sexual orientation and has used "sexuality as a site of contestation and subversion", especially in relation to lesbian and gay politics. In terms of this study, Foucault's conception of power and resistance and his work on surveillance are deemed invaluable. In the following paragraphs, the key theoretical concepts introduced at the beginning of the chapter are explicated.

## KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

### *Hybridity*

The question of hybridity has been a major concern of postcolonial studies, with Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity being the most prominent (Loomba, 1996). There are various meanings attached to the concept of hybridity. The term originated from a biological mix between a tame sow and wild boar which resulted in an offspring called 'hybrida' (Easthope, 2008). Thus, hybridity may be used in the biological sense, as a cross between two species. This can be extended to human beings, for example, hybridity referring to a mixture of races, ethnicities or cultures.

Through 'colonial hybridity', the colonial powers sought to produce Europeanised natives by simultaneously endeavouring to 'civilise' the colonised and to fix them into continual 'otherness' (Loomba, 1996). Attempts were made to retain uncontaminated white or European culture while at the same time introducing so-called civilising habits to the colonised. The colonial powers assumed that the colonised would never be entirely equivalent, and that this recognition on the part of the colonised would ensure their subjection. However, both the colonised and coloniser are inevitably changed by their contact with each other, and there is no such thing as a pure form of culture that is not already implicated in the other (Parkard, 2009).

In the South African context, Parkard (1989, p. 687) employs the "dressed native" concept to illustrate the operation of 'colonial hybridity'. The colonialists, in an effort to "detrribalise" urban Africans and promote public decency, gave them "European clothes" to wear (Parkard, 1989, p. 690). However, this turned out to be a mixed blessing for the colonialists as the European style of clothing was not entirely adopted, which irritated the colonialists. The colonialists often cited the infrequent washing of the European clothes as a problem (Parkard, 1989).

In practice, therefore, this colonial mission to civilise the native in the coloniser's terms did not succeed. Instead, Western ways of doing things were drawn upon, juxtaposed with indigenous ways, and then employed to affirm cultural alterity (Loomba, 1996). Cultural alterity refers to the practice by which societies and culture exclude others owing to their 'otherness' or being culturally different from them

(Schutte, 2005). It thus asserts the existence of unbridgeable difference between one culture and the 'other', especially of the coloniser and the colonised. In relation to hybridity, it shares the same goal of undermining the coloniser's strategy to produce Europeanised natives (Loomba, 1996). Loomba (1996) cites the example of Gandhi whose notion of non-violence was informed by his reading of Emerson and Thoreau (American writers) and Tolstoy (Russian writer), whilst evoking a specifically Hindu vision of a model society.

Bhabha's notion of hybridity is closely linked to the ambivalence of the colonial subject. Rather than polarising the coloniser-colonised relationship, Bhabha (1994) puts emphasis on the intricate nature of this relationship. He first asserts that the colonial subject is displaced as a result of the encounter with the colonizer. He then uses the concept of ambivalence to characterise the simultaneous desire and loathing intrinsic in the coloniser-colonised relationship. Owing to its mixed position, hybridity communicates ambivalence, thus allowing for "other 'denied' knowledges to enter the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rule of force" (Bhabha, 1985, p. 156). Hence, hybridity results in the generation of new and complex ways of doing things. In this way, "the words of the master become the site of hybridity" (Bhabha, 1985, p. 156). This is demonstrated by Gandhi's mixing of his Hindu ideas with those of colonial writers to articulate his own brand of a model society. Closer to home, writers such as Soga (a missionary) and Biko (2004), an activist and black consciousness leader, used colonialist discourses in an attempt to liberate the colonised. Soga, an isiXhosa speaking South African who studied theology in Scotland, used a Christian discourse, drawing from his missionary education in an attempt to liberate the African people (Khabela, 1996). Biko used 'blackness' in a positive way in an attempt to liberate black people from the apartheid legacy, which associated being black with negative things, thereby setting up resistance to the dominant ideology. In this study, due to colonial infiltration, a variety of hybridised ways of doing things in relation to spousal mourning was apparent. These ranged from the way visibility was practiced to celebratory notions of death such as having an 'after tears' party. These are taken up in the analysis chapters.

### ***Representation and Location(ality)***

The theoretical concerns of postcolonial feminism are largely connected to the issues of representation and the question of location (Hughes, 2002; Rajan & Park, 2001) and these two issues have been identified as creating specific challenges to the postcolonial researcher by Macleod and Bhatia (2008). A central issue to postcolonial feminism as identified by, and of importance to, this research is “an emphasis on multiple differences, complex diversities and locationality arising from issues of cultural hybridity and diasporic experiences [1].” (Hughes, 2002, p. 76).

Concerning the question of representation, Quayson (2000 as cited in Bose (2005) distinguishes between two ways in which representation is used, namely, as political representation and as discursive representation. In this research, the latter is deemed more significant. Discursive representation entails the “ways in which metaphors, tropes and concepts are used to project an image of some person or persons.” Quayson (2000, p. 104 as cited in Bose (2005). It is thus linked to subject positions, a concept that is of importance in this research and is taken up later. Furthermore, the identification of subject positions emanating from the discourses in which the constructions of men and women are embedded is an important aspect of this research, as indicated in the central questions driving this research.

As indicated earlier, an important aspect to theorizing in postcolonial feminism is location(ality). Hughes (2002, pp78-79) defines location thus:

Location and the loci of enunciation are the places and contexts from which we experience and speak, where we place ourselves ideologically, spiritually, imaginatively. In everyday language it answers the question ‘where are you coming from?’ and so gives us as readers a sense of differences we need to negotiate and the information and feelings we need to find out about in order to gain a better understanding of writing by those who come from and speak from contexts different from our own.

Location could, therefore, be influenced by an individual’s socio-cultural, economic, geographical or historical position. Location is also affected by issues of religion, ethnicity, race, class, age and sexual orientation, which all locate women differently.

They also constitute the complex diversities which might exist between the researcher and the researched, as well as between the researched themselves and therefore need to be acknowledged, historicized, politicized and deconstructed (Macleod & Bhatia, 2008; Rajan & Park, 2001; Sunde & Bozalek, 1993). Postcolonial feminism is adamant about the local readings of women's lives within a global context (Bose, 2005) and in so doing inserts nuance and complexity into the politics of feminism.

In the case of *ukuzila*, the different locations of men and women participants, as well as that of the researcher, including age and rural/urban location, amongst others, will need to be considered and analysed, as these impact the lives of the participants and the research process. This calls for reflexivity on the part of the researcher and this is attended to in the Methodology chapter where a section on reflexivity is undertaken. Having discussed postcolonial feminism as the theoretical framework to be utilized, and highlighted how it pays attention to complexity, specificity, location(ality), representation and issues of multiplicity regarding women in postcolonial settings, the following section will provide links of the framework with poststructuralism, on which it draws.

### ***Power relations***

Said (2005) underscores the discursive construction of the Orient as opposed to it being a static reality. The Orient, used to represent Otherness/the colonized, is contrasted with the Occident, the colonizer. The two are characterised by a power relationship in which the former is dominated by the latter. One of the areas in which this power imbalance is evident is in the representation of the Orient by the Occident. The Orient is essentialised and represented and as a homogenous category that is culturally backward, peculiar, weak and passive (Thieme, 2003). This “othering” process is used to produce, describe and solidify the West / Occident which is spoken of as rational, developed and superior (Said, 2005).

As Foucault (1980) has asserted, power is not a thing that a particular group, individual or class is in possession of and which is used in the manner of a force over another group or individual in order to obtain compliance. For Foucault, power is not simply a matter of repression or domination, but what you exercise when you draw

upon a discourse. Hence it is not something you have or do not have (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). In Foucault's notion of power, it is constructed as flowing omnidirectionally in a web-like fashion, such that "we are all enmeshed in power relations which are unequal and hierarchical" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 186). Powerlessness is thus no longer regarded as characteristic of every single woman, but as Mills (2002) has pointed out, powerlessness may pertain to many women some of the time or to a minority of women most of the time. Foucault did not conceive the effects of power as exclusionary, but rather, as productive; he highlighted the effect that power has on practices, and our behaviour rather than power itself, which he viewed as contextual, fluid and multiple (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982).

In this research, a number of discourses (see later discussion on the meaning of discourse) that were drawn upon in the constructions of spousal mourning were identified. In line with the assertion that "discourses are embedded in power relations" (Burr, 1995, p. 62), in all the discourses identified, unequal power relations between men and women were produced. For example, in the 'familial-*ukwenda*' and gendered religious discourses, men were produced as 'heads', and in the 'respect-*hlonipha*' discourse respect was first of all awarded on the basis of gender, with women having to earn it (see further discussion in analysis chapters).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1991) distinguished between two forms of power, namely, sovereign power and disciplinary power. He conceived of sovereign power as possessed by the monarch and other elites. Sovereign power was publicly exercised through public executions in the sovereign era in order to bring retribution on those who had offended the monarch. This form of power was characterised by the notion of the spectacle, where violations of the law resulted in the public display of the punishment meted out to the offender (Foucault, 1991). Excessive force was used on the criminal in the form of public torture, thus making visible the inscription of the king's power.

Disciplinary power differed from sovereign power in terms of the aim of punishment, as it was preventative and required secrecy, invisibility and autonomy in its operation. As pointed out by Dreyfus et al. (1982, p. 159), "There is reversal of power whereby power seeks invisibility and the objects of power on whom it operates, are made the

most visible”. Power becomes “multiple, automatic and anonymous” (Foucault, 1977/1995, p. 176). Furthermore, in contrast to sovereign power, it is exercised on a daily basis, in situations that involve minuscule elements (Foucault, 1995). According to Foucault’s model of disciplinary power, individuals assume the responsibility to discipline themselves thus becoming “docile subjects” (Foucault, 1977/1995, p. 138). Foucault (1995) asserted that disciplinary power enabled a more effective and efficient type of control, thus concluding that power is productive rather than repressive, creating the kind of individual envisaged.

Disciplinary power operates through such processes as normalisation, hierarchical judgement, subjectification, surveillance and visibility. In this research, the focus is on surveillance, visibility and subjectification through the creation of particular discursive subject positioning; these are discussed shortly. The continued visibility of women in spousal mourning has been identified as of interest in this study. Their constant visibility through the ‘clothes of mourning’ involves them in self-surveillance. Foucault also states that “Where there is power in society, there is resistance...” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). The section below looks at how Foucault theorised power and resistance.

### ***Power and resistance***

The display of sovereign power in the presence of huge masses of people turned out to be “double edged” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 146). The whole purpose of public torture was to instil fear, but in the event that the public regarded the punishment as unjust, the mob showed resistance in the form of a protest or revolt (Foucault, 1977/1995). The crowd which had gathered as spectators to the display of power could turn against the officials. In some instances, the criminal, who was supposed to confess the crime, thus “validating the truth of the justification of torture and the truth of the accusations” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 146), could instead defy the authorities and declare innocence. This would thus be a manifestation of resistance as “the site of power could easily become the site of social disturbance” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 146). As Foucault (1977/1995, p. 61) put it:

“In these executions, which ought to show only the terrorising power of the prince, there was a whole aspect of the carnival, in which rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals transformed into heroes.”

Foucault (1978, p. 95) asserts that it is through the articulation of these “points of resistance” that power spreads through the social field. As he puts it, “resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power”, instead, resistance is inscribed as “an underside” or “irreducible opposite” in all power relations (Foucault, 1978, p. 96). Due to the relational nature of power, and the fact that it is exercised in all social relationships; its targets are free to act or resist it at the various points in which it is exercised (Deveax, 2013). This may take the form of recognizing, questioning or subverting the social controls. Drawing attention to the liberatory aspect of power, Foucault brings to the fore the coexistence of power with resistances to it. According to Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p. 146) “resistance is both an element of the functioning of power and a source of its perpetual disorder”. In this research, the visibility of the widow through ‘clothes of mourning’ was seen highlighting gendered power relations as men were not marked with mourning clothes. However, points of resistance were also apparent. For example, some women would wear the ‘clothes of mourning’ but invert the rules of wearing by behaving inappropriately, whilst others showed resistance through verbal expressions.

Foucault’s conception of power and resistance is similar to the one articulated by Bhabha (1985). Bhabha (1985, p. 153) asserts that resistance is a product of power, “a condition produced by the dominant discourse itself”– referring to the colonialist discourse - thereby alluding to the productive effect of power. Like Foucault, he views resistance and power as not independent of each other. Addressing the dynamics of resistance within a colonialist discourse, Bhabha (1985, p. 153) contends that “Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation ...but the effect of, and ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference”.

The following section looks at Foucault’s concepts of visibility and surveillance, which stem from his ‘disciplinary power’.

### *Visibility and surveillance*

Disciplinary power is exercised through invisibility while the subjects of power are exposed to constant visibility. This visibility is managed through surveillance. Foucault used Bentham's (1791) architectural plan for the 'Panoptikon' to illustrate how surveillance is an integral part of social control in a disciplinary system. The 'Panoptikon' is an 18<sup>th</sup> century model prison in Europe, which consisted of a central watchtower surrounded by prison cells (Foucault, 1977). In it, a guard could keep watch over the inmates without them being certain of when they were being watched, and thus observed. In this way, the prisoners could be put under constant surveillance. "The subject's awareness of their own visibility is a fundamental factor and this awareness is what makes subjects come to themselves assume responsibility for the constraints of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 187), and "inscribe in themselves a power relation in which they are the principle of their own subjection" (Foucault, 1977, p. 203).

By being visible to everyone and yet no one in particular, disciplinary power (operating through visibility) allows for self and social regulation (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). There is thus an internalization of surveillance, whereby the subject self-monitors. In view of the fact that one is under 'permanent visibility', one assumes self-monitoring and control of own behaviour in line with the expected standards of 'normality'. The enforcement of the expected standards of normality is established in order to correct misbehaviour and minimize deviations from behavioural norms, a process referred to as normalizing judgements. Regulation thus becomes self-regulation as the person subjects him/herself to an internalised surveillance to ensure conformity to the norms of behaviour.

With reference to this research, the women acceded to the monitoring that was done by the 'clothes of mourning', referring to both self-monitoring and monitoring by others brought about by the constant visibility. Through the 'clothes of mourning', widows are subjected to a "field of visibility" (Foucault, 1982, p. 221-222) which makes them conscious of being watched. Normalising judgements could be passed by the people in the community concerning how the women handle their mourning.

They could be judged as handling it well or as discrediting the mourning process. Consequently, they exercise self-control as they are aware that if they transgress the rules of mourning they will be disciplined. In the words of (Foucault, 1980, p. 155), they become their “own overseer” “interiorizing” the “inspecting gaze” “exercising surveillance over, and against” themselves. They thus, come to act as if they are being watched, whether or not they are really being watched. In this way, the woman in mourning participates in sustaining and perpetuating a cultural practice that is regarded as oppressive.

An important aspect of poststructuralism is ‘positioning theory’ in which subject positions are discursively created, thus enabling a process of subjectification. This research utilises Davies and Harré (1990) and van Langenhove and Harré’s (1999) version of positioning theory to shed light on the subject positions emanating from the discourses identified as mediating the constructions of spousal mourning. This is discussed in the following section.

### ***Positioning theory***

The term ‘subject positions’ was first coined in Psychology by Hollway (1984). She used it to explain how men and women’s subjectivities in heterosexual relationships were “the product of their history of positioning in discourse.” (Hollway, 1984, p. 228). Davies and Harré (1990, p. 46) define a subject position this way:

A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire [2] and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use the repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in.

Parallel to ‘role’ in traditional psychology, ‘subject position’ articulates a more fluid identity in the sense that the individual can occupy a variety of positions, depending on the power dynamics and context (Butler, 1993). This fluidity and contingency of

identity resonates with poststructuralist thinking that social identities are “discursively constructed in historically specific social contexts; they are complex and plural; and they shift over time” (Fraser, 1992, p. 178). Subject positioning is also useful in articulating power dynamics in an interaction.

Furthermore, one can self-position (reflexive positioning) or can be positioned by another (interactive positioning) (Davies & Harré, 1990). In this research, there were instances of both reflexive positioning and interactive positioning. Reflexive positioning refers to self-positioning, whereby a person assumes a position. I positioned myself in several subject positions in the section on reflexivity. Interactive positioning refers to positioning by others, that is, imposed positioning, and can be accepted or rejected by the person being positioned (Davies & Harré, 1990). The participants also self-positioned and positioned others. The subject position of ‘*mendi*’ / married woman, with all the connotations that go with it was used by women to make sense of why visibility continued for them whereas it was no longer practiced by most men. The same subject position was used by men to justify why women were coerced into mourning visibly whereas they were not. The subject position was thus linked to issues of power in the family which reflected men’s cultural privilege. Hollway (1984, p. 236) asserts that “discourses make available positions for subjects to take up.” In this research, the *mendi* and head subject positions were made available by the ‘familial - *ukwenda*’ discourse. It explained the interactions between *mendi*, a subjugated position in the family, especially in relation to the head. For example, as a ‘head’ leads and is associated with a superior status whilst *mendi* is expected to be submissive in relation to her inferior status, thus exposing the family power dynamics.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter covered the theoretical lens that was used in this research, namely, postcolonial feminism, drawing on poststructuralism. The discussion included the various feminisms that have attempted to address women’s issues. Various forms of ‘Western feminisms’ were critiqued for focusing on women as a ‘universal group’ that was oppressed, thus omitting the various aspects that intersected with the oppression, such as, diversity along lines of religion, culture, sexuality, age, rural-

urban divides etc. In an attempt to redress this homogenisation of women, some ‘Third world’ women also faced the challenge of essentialising Africanness, ignoring their particularities. Alliance formation and solidarity was proposed in order to strengthen areas of convergence. The failure of postcolonialism to include gender in its agenda was addressed, focusing on its male centredness. Postcolonial feminism emerged as a movement that could address the multiple diversities of the women. In addition, it paid attention to the fluid, complex and contingent nature of their identities.

Poststructuralism was drawn on to illuminate the power issues attendant to the axes of differentiation. In particular, Foucault’s conception of power, surveillance, visibility and resistance were explored. The connection between visibility, surveillance (by self and others) and power was explored and linked to spousal mourning. The positioning theory, which articulates well with Foucault’s conception of power (as not fixed) and the notion of subjectification which is key to disciplinary technology were also employed. Subject positions are fluid and are in relations of power with each other. These poststructuralist concepts are taken up in the analysis chapter.

In relation to this research, the people under study the AmaXhosa are constructed as a heterogeneous group. Furthermore, the women and men are also constructed as a diverse group, along the lines of sexuality, religion, cultural beliefs, age, rural-urban and socio-economic status. This kind of understanding was then utilised in the analysis of the data. For example, various subject positions were identified as informed by the identified discourses. These not only pointed at the differences between men and women, but also at the differences between the women themselves. This chapter and the previous chapter have provided the backdrop to understanding the current research. In the following chapter, a review of literature on mourning is undertaken.

## CHAPTER 3: MOURNING

### INTRODUCTION

Mourning the death of someone or something significant is a universal human experience. It is generally agreed by researchers that mourning accompanies bereavement, which is the objective state of having lost someone or something significant (Stroebe, Stroebe & Hansson, 2006). However, how mourning takes its course differs from culture to culture and from individual to individual. This is an allusion to the cultural specificity of mourning.

According to Corr, Nabe and Corr (1997); Neimeyer, Prigerson and Davie (2002) and Payne, Horn and Relf (1999), mourning has two complementary aspects, namely, an internal private process and an outward, public one. The individually focused, intrapersonal process refers to our inward struggles to cope with the loss. The emotional response to that loss is defined in terms of psychological pain, anguish, deep sorrow and bitter feelings of regret, called grief (Corr et al., 1997; Payne et al., 1999). The public one refers to the overt expression of the grief, involving displaying of conventional or customary signs of grief such as the performance of particular rituals or the wearing of appropriate mourning clothing (Corr et al., 1997; Payne et al., 1999). Some authors refer to the emotional, intrapersonal process as grieving and to the one that involves the display of certain behaviours as mourning, thus distinguishing between the two, whilst others use the terms interchangeably, as in Corr et al. (1997). In this thesis, the terms grieving and mourning are used interchangeably, as they are encompassed in *ukuzila*, which, as indicated earlier on, refers to both mourning and grieving in general, and spousal mourning/grieving in particular.

Participants in the research raised a concern over the fact that when the time arrived for the ceremonial termination of the mourning period, an assumption was made that one's internal grief was healed. This kind of distinction between grief and mourning usually stems from the belief that culture influences mourning but not grief, which is regarded as natural, universal and totally psychological. For example, Niemeyer et al.

(2002) and Parkes (1974) agree that although grief is a universal experience, its expression varies according to cultural expectations. However, whether individuals in all societies share the same private experience of grief is a contested matter. As indicated, literature presents a variety of approaches to mourning. This study focuses on mourning as the cultural and gendered expression of grief.

In this chapter, the various approaches to mourning through the loss of someone significant will be examined. This chapter is structured as follows. First, it examines the conceptualization of mourning by what are termed mainstream or traditional theories of grief. Common among these mainstream theories is the severance of bonds from the deceased, as 'holding on' to the deceased is regarded as interfering with recovering from the loss. This is contrasted to the narrative approach, which upholds the continuation of bonds with the deceased. This is followed by anthropological, cultural psychological and postcolonial/critical feminist debates on mourning. Then, an explanation of *ukuzila* mourning practice, the main focus of this study is offered, followed by an examination of feminist understandings of mourning as well as research on mourning in Africa and South Africa.

Standard understandings in the psychological field centre on the private, intrapersonal, psychological process of mourning. These tend to concentrate more on the individual's adaptation to the loss and the impact and effects of bereavement and the resolution thereof. Examples of these mainstream understandings of mourning are those that characterise mourning as: griefwork, (Freud, 1985), in terms of stages (Kubler-Ros, 1969/1989), as phases (Bowlby, 1987), as the undertaking of tasks (Worden, 1991) and as processes (Rando, 1993).

Whilst the standard psychological approaches tend to concentrate on the health consequences of grief, anthropological, feminist and cultural psychological understandings as well as research on mourning in Africa tend to emphasize cultural expectations in terms of the process of mourning and the 'gendered' nature thereof. In addition, they tend to focus more on aspects such as rituals, gender and culturally acceptable ways of mourning. The following section covers the mainstream psychological understandings of mourning as well as offers critique thereof.

## MAINSTREAM OR STANDARD PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS IN PSYCHOLOGY

The mainstream or standard understandings of mourning in Psychology are branded as such in the sense that context is not central in their theorizing and the approaches tend to explore the ‘universal’ concerning the human psyche. In the sections that follow, the various mainstream or standard understandings of mourning in Psychology are examined. These consist of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, Kubler-Ross’ stages of mourning, Bowlby’s phases of mourning, Worden’s mourning as task undertaking, and Rados’ conceptualisation of mourning as processes. Their overall mission is for the bereaved person to emotionally let go of the deceased.

### *Freudian or psychoanalytic theory*

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of mourning is a classic example of mainstream psychological approaches which focus on the dynamics of the internal world of the mourner, thus locating mourning intrapsychically. He conceptualized grieving as ‘work’. Freud proposed that grief is an adaptation to loss and his theory stresses ‘working through’ mourning, with the goal of emotionally detaching from the deceased (Freud, 1917/1985). Consequently, his theory is sometimes referred to as the ‘grief work’ theory (Kastenbaum, 2004). As the mourner engages in this ‘grief work’, he or she frees himself or herself from the emotional pool of negative thoughts, memories and emotions, which are all forms of attachments to the deceased (Freud 1917/1934). According to Kastenbaum (2004), the ‘pay’ for this work is the restoration of one’s own peace of mind and social competence. Thus, the prescription of the theory is for the mourner to ‘resolve’ the grief through the severance of bonds from the deceased and ‘moving on’ by forming new attachments in order to facilitate healing (Stroebe et al., 1992; Walter, 1999/2001).

Mourning for Freud involves a withdrawal of libidinal energy from the outside world, and its concentration on the deceased, the lost object (Freud, 1917/1984). This is accompanied by painful feelings of dejection and an inability to find a new love object. The bereaved person withdraws feelings of attachment to the lost object, until ready to find a new love object. This is referred to as the decathexis process (Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen & Stroebe, 1992). The energy is then withdrawn into the mourner

where it stays for some time until the loss is accepted, at which stage it is invested in a new love object. The acceptance of the loss by emotionally detaching from the bereaved is the goal of grief work (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). When the loss has been accepted, the bereaved person is assumed to be able to move towards a substantial return to an active and fulfilling life. Thus, Freud promotes the idea of grieving whereby the severance of the attachments to the deceased is a necessary precondition for healing to occur (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007; Stroebe et al., 1992). This is the normal process in which the ‘successful’, healthy mourner engages.

The assumption, therefore, is that successful mourning is the ‘moving on’ which only takes place when one ‘let’s go’ of the bond with the deceased. However, this severance of bonds from the loved one may be problematic in some cultures, which may actually prefer the maintenance of bonds with the deceased whilst forging new ties (Kastenbaum, 2004; Walter, 1999/2001). In the context chapter, it was highlighted that part of the ‘African belief system’ is the continuation of life after death by the ‘living dead’ and the maintenance of a good relationship with them (now ancestors). For example, a year after the funeral, the AmaXhosa (Bongela, 2001; Hirst, 2005; Soga, 1937/89; Solomon, 1986; van Heerden, 2002) and AmaZulu (Mkhize, 2008) have a special ceremony *ukubuyisa* - the ‘return ritual’ to ‘bring back’ the spirit of the deceased home. *Ukubuyisa* seeks to sustain the bond with the deceased person, incorporating him/her into the ongoing life of the family as an invisible member whilst the bereaved persons move on with their lives. The issue of ancestors as part of the family to which the bereaved wife is married was raised in the data as justification for the visibility of the widow, as a sign of showing respect to the ancestors. Valuing of ‘continuing bonds’ with the people who have died is an aspect which Freud’s conceptualization pathologizes, thus disregarding cultural context, and assuming mourning to be universal. In this thesis, the socially situated nature of mourning, and thus its historical and cultural specificity is taken into consideration.

Abnormal, pathological or complicated mourning, termed melancholia by Freud (1985), occurs when the mourner, termed ‘melancholic’, identifies with the lost loved one and directs the criticism and anger which belongs to the lost one to himself or herself. This occurs when the mourner has unresolved and deeply buried guilt, anger, hurt or attachment to the deceased (Craib, 2000). Melancholia, then, is a state in

which the mourner has taken the lost loved one inside (the bond is not severed), a process known as internalization or incorporation (Freud, 1917/1984), and kept him or her there, attacking himself/herself rather than the person who is lost. Abnormal, pathological or complicated grief (melancholia) is thus one that is prolonged, denied or else deviating from the more typical expressions of grief. As a result of complicated grief, the mourner finds it difficult to move on. The work of mourning is carried out over time, using up a lot of cathartic energy. Upon completion, the ego becomes free, unbounded to the deceased and uninhibited again (Freud 1917/1984).

This distinction between normal and abnormal mourning has been criticized for labelling and stigmatizing the mourner. What is considered pathological is contextual as some individuals and certain cultures value the continuation of bonds with the deceased as a way of adaptive coping (Rothaupt & Becker, 2012). Hence labelling such mourning as abnormal is viewed as stigmatising the mourner.

The theory has, however, been commended for its analysis of grief as an emotional reaction. According to Stroebe, Stroebe and Hansson (2006), the theory has made a great contribution in understanding the emotional symptomatology in response to loss. Stages/phases theories, dealt with below, are similar to the Freudian approach in that they also centre on the intrapsychic dimension of mourning.

### *Stages/Phases theories*

According to this perspective, one goes through a series of stages in processing or working through grief. This entails a gradual lessening of any endeavour at re-establishing attachment to the deceased at each stage or phase (Stroebe et al., 1992). Descriptions of some of the phases, as well as the total number of phases or stages, differ from one stage theorist to another. This approach to mourning is adapted from Kubler-Ross's (1969/1989) stages of grief, developed from her work on dying patients. Mourning is regarded as a series of stages (Kubler-Ross's, 1969/1989) or phases (Bowlby, 1960/1980). The five stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance or DABDA for short. This approach is informed by a psychodynamic perspective. Similar to the psychodynamic perspective, the severance

of bonds with the deceased is considered a prerequisite for the bereaved person's recovery (Stroebe et al., 1992).

Although there are stages, a person may skip one stage and return to it later. So they do not necessarily occur in the same sequence, but are meant to be general guidelines. Successful completion of the stages is considered 'normal mourning' and failure to resolve mourning as expected results in mourning being viewed as abnormal or pathological (Corr et al., 1997). Thus stage or phase theorists of mourning also distinguish between 'normal' and 'pathological' grief. The first stage, denial, occurs upon hearing that one has lost a significant person. It is a defence mechanism against the shock of hearing about the loss. As reality about the situation emerges, denial is replaced by pain, but pain is too intense to bear at this stage and is redirected and expressed as anger, the second stage. This anger may be directed at the deceased or those around the bereaved person like friends, family and strangers sometimes. The painful reality of the loss eventually gives way to feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. These feelings are considered as a need to regain control. The defence that is engaged during this phase is bargaining. The bereaved person secretly bargains with God or some higher being in an attempt to postpone the inevitable, which is accepting the death (Kubler-Ross's, 1969/1989).

The next stage is depression. The two types of depression associated with mourning are a reaction to the practical implications relating to the loss, and a more private one around preparing for the final loss of 'letting go'. Feelings mostly associated with this type of depression are sadness and regret. The bereaved person may worry about burial, the cost implications and about neglected dependents. The last stage is acceptance. This is the stage where the bereaved person makes peace and is marked by withdrawal and calm. However, not everyone is able to reach this stage (Axelford, 2006). The stages or phases theory of mourning is therefore similar to Freud's psychoanalytic theory with regards to the 'letting go' of the deceased for recovery to occur.

### ***Other stage theories***

The stage or phases theory of mourning has been refined several times. For example,

Bowlby (1969/1989) proposes 4 phases in an overall process of realization, defined as making real in one's inner, psychic world, that which is already real in the outer objective world. Thus for Bowlby the aetiology of mourning lies in 'environmental failure'; he saw mourning in terms of cause and effect and therefore as less of an internal psychological process. To him mourning is normal, although it brings discomfort and disturbance of function and complications may set in, thus delaying healing. Bowlby (1969/1989) presents grief in terms of presenting symptoms and emotions. His stages or phases are shock and numbness; pining, yearning and searching; disorganization and depression; and reorganization (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007; Shuchter & Zissok, 2006). The shock and numbness are attributed to the impact of the loss; the pining entails yearning and searching for the bereaved and for things to return to 'normal', but since this cannot happen, disorganization and depression set in as a reaction to the failure of efforts to reinvigorate the past; the mourner feels disorientated with recovery beginning only after the last experience of reorganization which is initiated when one can begin to pick up the pieces of one's life again and move on (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007; Shuchter & Zissok, 2006).

Another model proposes time-based characteristics instead of the stages or phases (Corr et al., 1997). The first period is the shock and numbing period commencing as soon as one finds out that a significant other has died. The numbness is regarded as a self-protecting mechanism that keeps us from being overwhelmed with what has happened. The bereaved usually report going through the motions of the funeral without remembering much of what happened (Guzana, 2004). Thus one mentally registers the death, but is emotionally out of synch. The next period takes place as the numbness wanes. The extent of the situation begins to sink in and this is followed by intense grieving and adjusting to a world without the significant other. The third period occurs when we are able to effectively function in the world. There may be some residual grief, but overall, the mourner is not focused on thoughts about the loss, but on re-learning to live in the world without the significant other. The theory is thus in favour of 'letting go'. The 'letting go' is believed to aid the mourner in being more open to re-establishing his or her place in the world.

### *Critique of the stages/phases model*

Like all stage theories, the model assumes universal application of the stages, but studies indicate that mourning varies from culture to culture and sometimes within a specific culture (Cattell, 2003; Niemeyer, 2002). It, therefore, does not take into account issues of cultural specificity. In this study, issues of cultural specificity with regards to mourning are brought to the fore.

Furthermore, stage theories have been criticized for assuming that mourning is a passive process (Eisenbrunch, 1984; Shuchter & Zissok, 2006). This passivity is assigned from the nature of stage theories in which the mourner is assumed to be a victim with no choice as to how to proceed with their grieving, but moving mutely through stages, until mourning is over (Eisenbrunch, 1984; Shuchter & Zissok, 2006). This is in contrast to the view that one should mourn in a way that is meaningful to them. Pincus (1976, p. 123) asserts that “mourning takes different forms with each individual. The precondition for a person to complete their process must be that they are allowed to mourn in their own way and time”.

Stages set standards prescribing what grieving is like, and how one should mourn. Although the model was developed on the basis of a few selected people, it has been generalized as applicable to everyone. Deviation from these stages is regarded as problematic and sometimes as pathological. The stages or phases thus serve as a ‘gaze’ that people judge themselves against, and this may result in increased stress levels during an emotionally distressing time (Eisenbrunch, 1984; Shuchter & Zissok, 2006). Thus, whether the stages of grief occur in the same sequence and at the same rate in all cultures has been rendered problematic (Eisenbrunch, 1984; Shuchter & Zissok, 2006).

The theory views mourning as an individual thing but in some cultures, mourning is communal, with entire villages, for example, stopping their work when there has been a bereavement in their community (Pahl, Pienaar & Ndungane, 1989) and people coming in and out of the individual’s home to share the pain and grieve with the bereaved (Mkhize, 2004; Osei-Mensah, 1999). Therefore, in the stages or phases theory people’s cultural specificities are not given priority.

Both the psychoanalytic and stage or phases theories have been challenged for their proposition of ‘letting go’ of the deceased by those in favour of ‘continuing bonds’. It has been established by some researchers (for example, Stroebe et al.,1992) that whether continuing bonds are maintained or immediately severed, in general, normal adjustment within the culture is attained. In opposition to the phases of mourning, other theorists proposed the conceptualization of mourning as task undertaking and it is to this approach that we now turn.

### ***Mourning as task undertaking***

The task model of bereavement was developed by Worden (1982/1991). According to the mourning as task undertaking model, there are certain tasks a mourner must accomplish in order to move through the grief experience and return to a meaningful, satisfying, and effectively functioning life (Corr et al., 1997). In contrast to the stages or phases approach, the mourner is therefore active, engaging in the tasks. The four tasks identified by Worden (1991) are: (1) acceptance of the loss; (2) working through the pain of grief, that is, giving up the attachments to the person and the life that used to be; (3) moving into the new life, but remembering the old: adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing; and (4) reinvesting emotions and energies in other relationships and activities, that is, emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life.

The relocation of the deceased thus allows for emotional connection with the deceased but in a new way (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). Therefore, it is not necessary to ‘cast off’ the loved one. Instead, one can reconstruct the relationship and keep it going in a revised and more adaptive way. This resonates with some cultural practices whereby relations with the deceased are maintained whilst the bereaved person moves on with their lives, as mentioned previously.

The task model is more fluid than the linear stage model as the bereaved is free to revisit any completed tasks in any given order (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). It is similar to the stages or phases model in so far as it also advocates for the ‘letting go’ of the deceased and ‘moving on’. Although the mourner is not assumed to be passive,

this conceptualization of mourning as a task is also prescriptive and may not be generalizable to all cultures. For example, it is still located at an individual level, whereas in some cultures, for example, among the AmaZulu and the AmaXhosa, ‘community-based grief’ is practiced as indicated above (Mkhize, 2004).

The common factor in the mainstream theories discussed has been the acceptance of loss as the goal although they differ as to how the acceptance is achieved. Whilst some theorists believe that grief can and should be ‘resolved’ within a reasonable but not standard and fixed period of time, others believe that the loss of a crucial relationship is never completely resolved, and that in spite of recovery and moving on with our lives, we will never again be the same (Butler, 2004).

Another commonality in all the grief theories discussed in the above section was the individualistic nature of their theorizing about grieving, whereas, as pointed out, some cultures actually share grieving. This gives the impression that culture is unitary and static rather than diverse and changing. However, owing to their diverse nature, cultures hold divergent views in their definition/s of death and the appropriate manner of grieving (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). An example has been cited in the context section concerning the concept of ‘the living dead’, whereby death is viewed as a transformation from one state to another, hence the reincorporation of the dead member rather than ‘letting go’ of them. The narrative approach to mourning is discussed below as an approach in which ‘letting go’ is countered.

### ***The narrative approach***

Narrative approaches hold the view that people’s lives are shaped by stories and narratives, which are both cultural and individual (White, 1997). When dealing with bereaved persons, the narrative approach incorporates two practices, namely, ‘re-membering’ practices and ‘saying hello again’ (White, 1997). ‘Re-membering’ practices involve using the notion of ‘membered’ lives, and the metaphor of ‘club’, whereby a person’s life is viewed as ‘membered’ by people who belong to the person’s club of life. Furthermore, re-membering opens up possibilities for the person to revise membership of their club of life, including those who have died. Re-membering practices allow for the acknowledgement of significant and valued

contributions that others have made in people's lives, thus enabling them to experience their lives as more "richly described", and to experience the fuller presence of these people even if dead (White, 1997, p. 23). This may be contrasted to the isolation and vulnerability to the feeling of being alone that might be engendered by the practice of 'letting go'.

'Saying hello again' entails having conversations with the bereaved person, in which their relationship with the lost loved one is reincorporated, with the view to resolving grief (White, 1997). These conversations also enable the provision of experiences of the touch and voices of the lost loved ones to the bereaved person/s on a daily basis (White, 1997). As stated by White (1997), these conversations have contributed to the people's recovery from the desperation and despair caused by their grief, especially those who had suffered from delayed or pathological grief.

In the following sections, the approaches described take into consideration the gendered nature of the mourning practices, the cultural specificity of the people as well as the particularities of people within those cultures.

## ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF MOURNING

In contrast to the mainstream psychological understandings of mourning which centre on the inner processes, anthropological researchers are more concerned with the outward forms of the practice as informed by different cultural contexts. The researchers are primarily interested in understanding particular rituals and "indigenous traditional ideas" (Pauw, 1990, p. 78) and symbolic and social meanings attached to mourning in a community. For example, they tend to cover topics on rituals and observances of mourning, and the underlying beliefs, including their implications for men and women. Anthropology has traditionally used ethnography and immersion in a particular 'culture' as its methodology. However, there have been significant debates regarding the notion of 'culture', and the question of studying other people's 'culture', which can lead to a form of 'othering'. The various notions of 'culture' are addressed in the next chapter.

An example of mourning rituals and their underlying beliefs that anthropologists have studied is that of cannibalism. Cannibalism and eating the ashes of the deceased is practised by some cultures as a way of honouring the dead, for example, among the Wari Indians of the Western Arizona rainforest in the 1960s (Conklin, 2001). This practice can be compared to Freud's incorporation or internalisation of the lost object, although they do it literally.

Drawing on Mary Douglas' (1966) work, some researchers working from this approach have investigated the topic of mourning from a position of pollution or 'ritual danger', for example, Hirst (2006) and Pauw (1990) in South Africa, Sossou (2002) in Africa. The mourner is considered to be ritually impure because of death. Mourning is then regarded as rite of passage from a state of 'impurity' to another. However, as pointed out previously, the focus of rituals associated with this 'impurity' has tended to be on women. The association of impurity with the mourner results in her seclusion (Douglas, 1966), as shown, for example by Hirst (2006) in South Africa, and Osei-Mensah (1999) in Nigeria. The widow is viewed as "dirty, in darkness and contagious", and therefore, as having detrimental effects on others, which requires her seclusion from the community (Pauw, 1990, p. 75). The question of contamination by death was raised in the data as an explanation for the restricted movement of the mourner.

With respect to the aspect of 'ritual danger', these approaches tend to focus their attention on the treatment of the 'impurity' since the mourner needs to be 'purified' before rejoining the community. The mourner engages in a series of rituals as part of the purification process. These have been identified as shaving of heads (Lamb, 2000; Mtshemla, 2005; Pahl, Pienaar & Ndungane, 1989), wearing 'clothes of darkness' as a sign of mourning (Pauw, 1975; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007; Sossou, 2002) and nightly washes at the river (Magudu, 2004; Manyedi et al., 2003; Pauw 1990).

In addition to the purification process, the mourner is further required to follow certain prohibitions such not eating certain food, and leaving home until their purification is complete (Hirst, 2005; Sossou, 2002). It is worth noting that the purpose of 'the withdrawal from the outside world' advocated in the psychoanalytic

approach is to facilitate acceptance of the loss, whereas within this approach, it is to rid oneself of what is referred to as *isimnyama* (directly translated as ‘blackness’) and signifying the ‘curse of death’. Thus the withdrawal is not about facilitating acceptance but rather to avoid the contamination of others. However, this tends to apply mostly to women who are coerced to carry out the rituals (Manyedi et al., 2003).

As part of the passage from impurity within *ukuzila*, at the end of mourning, mourning clothes are burned, blood is shed with usually a white goat or ox slaughtered, special beer is brewed for the occasion, and new clothes are worn to incorporate the person to society (Hirst, 2006; Pauw, 1990). The putting on of new clothes is associated with the person’s new status in society. In some cultures, ritual cleansing by sex (Akol, 2011; Kastenbaum, 2004; Pauw, 1990) is practiced as part of the treatment. For example, in some Sotho and Tswana communities, if the woman is young, she is assigned to a male related to her late husband who is to care for her physically and sexually (Pauw, 1990).

The rationale provided for the differential treatment with regard to impurity around death has been women’s sexuality which has been considered polluting in certain ‘times of womanhood’. This aspect has been covered in the context section in the discussion of African narratives of sexuality. According to Hirst (2006) and Pauw (1990) women are seen as the most impure, a state which is attributed to their sexuality, and linked to reproduction, for example, menstruation and child-birth. Thus, the explanation of the women’s impurity is linked to a biological discourse, which naturalises and essentialises the difference between men and women, thereby legitimating why women should mourn differently.

Whilst some anthropological approaches tend not to problematise the differential treatment of men and women concerning mourning, thereby legitimizing gender differences and inequalities regarding the mourning practice, others, for example, Cattell (2003) and Sossou (2002) problematize the mourning practices and the culture that is informing them, especially with reference to the woman. They attend to issues of oppression, domination and control of widows through the practices. For example, they highlight how widows lose their status in the community. Remarriage becomes

an issue for them but not the widower. Women also lose property rights, as a result of the subjugated position of the woman and the belief that a man's heirs are his kin and not his wife. The following is another approach to mourning that takes cultural issues into consideration.

## CULTURAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Cultural-psychological approaches are more clinically inclined in their research than anthropological accounts but tend to focus on how the clinical issues are culturally mediated. Furthermore, they centre on the psychological consequences of cultural practices, especially as they relate to women. Manyedi et al., (2003, p. 71) define the mourning process as “the actions and manner of expressing grief, which often reflects the widow's practices of her culture”. Therefore, they allude to the cultural patterning of mourning, as well as its public expression.

Trends in the literature indicate that culturally sanctioned ways of grieving and mourning may act as a buffer against the loss of a loved one or as a source of stress (Lund, 1989; Manyedi et al., 2003; Somhlaba & Wait, 2008). Supportive behaviours of others, for example, through collective or communal mourning, whereby one's family, clan and the community at large offer comfort to the bereaved, may alleviate the pain brought about by the loss. However, some of the cultural and familial demands on the mourner may cause distress. For example, the imposition of decisions taken by the family may compound the grief of the person (usually the widow) and add to their stress (Manyedi et al., 2003; Somhlaba, 2006; Sossou, 2002). In this study, the question of the widow's mourning being determined at familial level and imposed on the widow (whereas the widower did as he pleased) was raised by the participants. This issue is discussed in analysis Chapter 6.

The stigmatization of widowhood as a result of cultural beliefs and customs of the bereaved have been highlighted by some researchers (for example, Manyedi et al., 2003; Mate, 2013; Okesh, 2013; Rosenblatt & Nkosi 2007; Wait & Somhlaba, 2008). The stigmatization of the widow has been linked to the cultural belief that she is carrying the ‘curse of death’ and, therefore, people fear being contaminated with her bad luck. Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007) reported on how Zulu widows also faced

stigmatisation and were supposed to sit at the back of a taxi or bus so as not to expose others to their bad luck. The issue of the isolation of widows due to the belief that they are contaminated was brought up in the context section of Chapter 1 under the heading of *Narratives of 'African belief' and notions of (woman's) sexuality*. The 'curse of death' in the current research was invoked by the women participants, who positioned themselves as Eve's descendants and therefore 'worthy' of punishment through the oppressive mourning practice. This aspect is discussed in Chapter 7 which analyses the discourses informing the constructions of spousal mourning and the associated subject positions.

The restrictions placed on the widows by the cultural belief that they are contaminated with the 'curse of death' results in the widows' isolation at a time when they need support, thus impacting negatively on their wellbeing. The cultural beliefs and customs may, therefore, serve to undermine the widows' adaptation to the loss. Psychological consequences, such as stress, depression and anxiety resulting from the isolation and stigmatization due to customs prescribed by society for the widows, are highlighted by Manyedi et al., (2003), Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007), Sossou (2002) and Somhlaba and Wait (2008). This aspect was also raised in the current research. The widows reported feeling 'imprisoned' by the clothes as they were not allowed to move around whilst wearing the mourning clothes. This sense of being "imprisoned" has been highlighted in the research conducted by Manyedi et al., (2003, p. 76).

Some researchers have documented the intersection of widows' grief with issues of poverty, for example, Mate (2013), Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007) and Sossou (2002). In general, the man is regarded as the breadwinner and if he dies, the widow is left with the burden of taking over this role. Cultural practices such *ukukhapha* and *ukubuyisa* rituals mentioned earlier, which place demands on the widow to slaughter an ox, have been highlighted as very distressing to widows who are already experiencing poverty (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007). Widows' distress is also compounded by cultural beliefs around witchcraft (Mate, 2013; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007 & Sossou, 2002). When the man dies before the wife dies, the wife is usually accused of having had a hand in the death and accused of witchcraft. The accusations of witchcraft mean that the widow is deprived of support from others at a time she needs it the most (Mate, 2013; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007; Sossou, 2002).

Rosenblatt and Nkosi's (2007) study revealed that despite the contextual issues mentioned, the psychological grief pattern of DABDA was similar to the one experienced by women they had studied in the 'West'. In view of the issues highlighted in this section concerning the emotional and financial burdens placed on the widow, Somhlaba and Wait (2008) have advocated for psycho-education and bereavement intervention programmes that take these concerns into account.

#### POSTCOLONIAL / CRITICAL FEMINIST DEBATES ON MOURNING

Some feminists have adopted a critical perspective on mourning, not just as a gender issue but as activism (Athanasίου, 2005). This encompasses mourning for the 'other': those who are marginalised in society, such as sexual minorities, illegal immigrants, foreigners, people of certain colour and women (Athanasίου, 2005; Butler, 2004). This stance resonates with the theoretical lens adopted in the current research, which takes into account power relations and how they enable marginalisation along particular axes of differentiation. In the current research, the lack of mourning for women by widowers could be characterised as an example of how through widowers' lack of mourning, women are 'othered' and marginalised.

In the critical perspective on mourning advocated by Athanasίου (2005), a distinction is made between private, depoliticised mourning and public, political mourning (Athanasίου, 2005; Butler, 2004; Kotze et al., 2012). There is a public display of mourning which is regarded as part of a 'caring solidarity' with the 'other', and as a form of resistance and political intervention (Kotze et al., 2012).

Butler (2004, p. 32) has attended to the issue of political, social and psychological foreclosures that have rendered certain kinds of lost lives "ungrievable". Butler (2004) renders problematic the exclusion of certain lives (classified as not grief worthy) from mourning practices. For example, the obscurity of gay men at familial funeral ceremonies renders their grief unrecognisable since they are not considered as part of the family (Athanasίου, 2005). By problematising these exclusions, Butler is "making lives count as lives" and rendering them "grievable" (Butler, 2004, p. 20).

This has been echoed by Stanley (2002, p. 14) who asserts the “indivisible irreducible worth of every person’s life, every person’s death and every person’s pain.”

As part of the “activism of mourning” (Athanasίου, 2005, p. 42), Women in Black, an international feminist anti-military organisation was established in 1988 in Jerusalem. The vision of Women in Black is to engage in “public ritual acts of feminist defiance” by mourning for the “unmournable” or “ungrievable” whose life has been referred to by Walter Benjamin as “bare life” (that portion of humanity that is deemed unqualified for political acknowledgment), through holding silent vigils and in some cases publicly displaying the feminine body (Athanasίου, 2005, p. 43). Those opposed to this kind of mourning, such as authorities, regard it as inappropriate and disruptive. It is aimed at resisting the customary propriety of mourning which is generally restricted to the home as the ‘proper place’ for women’s mourning (Athanasίου, 2005).

By engaging in public collective responsibility for the losses of other women (Athanasίου, 2005; Butler, 2004), the Women in Black serve as “second degree witnesses” to the ‘other’ women who have incurred losses through such atrocities as rape, murder and kidnapping, thus transforming “bad death” that is unmourned and that is unwitnessed into “good death” (Athanasίου, 2005, p. 46). In this way, justice and honour are brought to the lives lived and deaths died of those who are marginalised (Stanley, 2002). These constructions of marginalised women’s lives as ungrievable are similar to the constructions in this research, of men’s mourning as “men do not mourn” since it indicates that the AmaXhosa women’s lives are not worthy of grief.

Stanley (2002) regards these acts of ‘witnessing’, and remembrance as essential to mourning. Stanley (2002) advocates for the retention of life in death through acts of remembrance rather than surrendering. This may be compared to the continuation of bonds with the deceased rather than ‘letting go’, an aspect discussed under ‘mainstream understandings’ of mourning. Another way of incorporating the deceased is through what (Stanley, 2002, p. 7) refers to as “domesticated death”, whereby “bringing it home” / “homely mourning” practices such as having the ashes of the deceased ‘living’ at home are implemented, thus not allowing the person to

depart fully. The “continual presence” of the deceased is a way of subverting the “law of mourning” (Stanley, 2002, p. 6). According to this law, the living are separated from the dead, to signify closure, for example, by being ‘laid to rest’ in the graveyard. Therefore, when “domesticated death” is implemented, the dead are out of place, hence this is regarded as subversion of “the law of mourning” (Stanley, 2002, p. 6-7). The following section, describes ‘*ukuzila* mourning practice’ which was introduced in the context section.

## UKUZILA MOURNING PRACTICE

*Ukuzila* refers to the mourning practice among AmaXhosa. It is also used to refer specifically to spousal mourning. A brief background to this practice was provided in Chapter 1. In this section, a discussion of some of the descriptions provided by researchers on the practice of *ukuzila* is presented. These descriptions sometimes give the impression of a rigidity of practice. However, the practices are dynamic and changing, and practised in various ways according to circumstance.

Researchers have asserted that a commonly held belief among ‘Africans’ is that death brings about contamination. This aspect was covered in the context section of the introductory chapter. The symbolic significance of the separation of the bereaved from work and other people has been linked by researchers to this belief (Hirst, 2006; Pauw 1990). Although the whole family of the deceased is affected by the death, the woman is regarded as the most contaminated and therefore the most contagious (Hirst, 2006; Pauw, 1990). Utilizing the ‘discourse of nature’ which is closely aligned to the biological discourse, Ortner (1974) as cited in Moore (1994) attempted to shed light on this issue. According to the discourse of nature, women, due to their physiology and reproductive functions, including birthing, lactation and menstruation are regarded as closer to nature or the physical world than men (Ortner, 1974 as cited in Moore, 1994). For this reason, the widow is the focus of the mourning rituals. She is put in strict exclusion from public life and her observance of *ukuzila* is the most extensive until ritual cleansing has been performed, as it is feared that she might contaminate other people with bad luck (Hirst, 2006; Pauw 1990; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007). However, the mourning widower is quickly discharged from such restrictions.

The following paragraphs outline some of the mourning actions and modes of expressing grief required of the woman.

Regarding the restriction of dress, as a sign of mourning and respect for the deceased, the widow is to wear special mourning garments. She is given a black head-cloth and dress and this is worn until a ceremony marking the termination of the mourning period is held and she resumes wearing normal clothes (Mtshemla, 2005; Pauw, 1990; Solomon, 1986). The widower usually wears a black armband or just a button covered with a black cloth. However, there is controversy around the wearing of black as the colour for mourning since the indigenous traditional symbol of death was white and black was introduced by the colonialists (Zide, 1984). Anecdotal reports from traditional rural areas indicate that the wearing of white as the colour of mourning is still prevalent. According to some researchers, the purpose of wearing black mourning clothes by the widow is to be distinguishable and thereby prevent men approaching the widow for sexual relationships (Guzana 2004; Mtshemla 2005). This aspect was also alluded to by the participants in this research and is discussed in the analysis section dealing with visibility of the widow. However, this marking of the widow has now become dangerous due to social and contextual factors. For example, due to social ills such as violent crime and violence against women, the special clothing makes them a target to criminals in the community, especially those who would leave her alone if the husband were present (Guzana 2004).

The prescribed mourning period for the widow is usually a year although it can sometimes be negotiated to be shortened due to special circumstances, for example, in the event of the woman being sick. This period is usually shorter for the widower. The reason advanced for this is that the woman is considered as the most polluted by death and therefore the most contagious (Hirst, 2006; Pauw 1990). Another reason offered by participants in this study for the shorter period for men is men's masculinity and the male sex-drive (MSD). MSD postulates that men are driven by an uncontrollable sex-drive that is natural (Shefer & Foster, 2001).

At the end of the prescribed mourning period, a special ceremony is held in which the personal effects of the deceased are burnt, the widow is washed as part of ceremonial cleansing, animals are slaughtered, beer is brewed and the mourning clothes are burnt

and replaced by new ones (Hirst, 2006; Pauw, 1990). Then all the restrictions imposed during the mourning period are lifted. The dearth of literature referring to the widower, when addressing either the mourning process or spousal mourning, is suggestive of mourning as a widow's obligation. This section has highlighted the outward expression of mourning focusing on *ukuzila*. The next section will focus on feminist research on *ukuzila*.

#### FEMINIST RESEARCH ON MOURNING IN (SOUTH) AFRICA

Feminist research on mourning in (South) Africa takes up the anthropological and cultural research on mourning and problematizes it, especially the gendering of the practice. Guzana (2004), who conducted research on *ukuzila*, approaches mourning from a feminist perspective and focuses on women's experiences of the practice. She pays attention to issues of power, gender, oppression and the subordination of women through the practice. Guzana (2004) conducted in-depth, unstructured interviews in which she documented the mourning experiences of two political widows. They were referred to as political widows since their husbands had been murdered in the struggle for democracy in South Africa. She alludes to the mourning practice as a rite of passage and as an adaptation to loss. For example, in the case of spousal bereavement, she considers it as a transition from being married to being unmarried and therefore as a change in status, such as from wife to widow or from husband to widower. Hence the mourning rituals are put in place so as to induct one to the new status. However, she is critical of the surveillance of the widow in particular by some of the mourning practices. For example, the wearing of black clothes by the woman is compared to the widower being required to wear only a black button. This wearing of the black button can be done for any close relative, for example, parents, children and siblings whereas the woman wearing black clothes indicates loss of spouse. The widow is therefore marked out whereas this is not the case with the widower. The new status for the woman often leads to deprivation of certain rights such as right to property, loss of social status, marginalization and suffering various forms of discrimination and stigmatization (Akol, 2011; Cattell, 2003; Guzana, 2004; Magudu, 2004; Manyedi et al., 2003).

Guzana (2004) specifically focuses on the 'silencing' nature of the practice in relation to the widow. A woman in mourning is supposed to be silent, keep her voice very low and may not complain about what they are not happy about. This 'silencing' has been echoed in Magudu's (2004) study wherein the women participants expressed the absence of an appropriate forum in which they could express their feelings, frustrations and needs in relation to this practice. She problematizes the way mourning is 'structured' for the woman as prescribed by the AmaXhosa culture and upheld by cultural custodians. This can be compared to that of men (if any), who carry on with their lives as normal whilst the women mourn (Kotze et al., 2012). In this study, the participants highlighted this discrepancy by pointing out that the men do as they please.

The public performance of the practice is also contrasted to the 'inner' healing process of mourning. Guzana (2004) asserts that the outer, public mourning process interferes with the inner, private one. For example, one of her informants comments that "society is however more concerned with upholding culture than with her personal healing" (Guzana, 2004, p. 13), referring to the prescribed mourning period and assumption of healing for the person once it is over, and how the mourning clothes are a constant reminder of the loss, refreshing the sorrow and, therefore, slowing down the healing process. She therefore emphasizes the manner in which cultural beliefs and customs exacerbate the situation of the widow. This has also been highlighted in the work of Manyedi et al. (2003), in which the cultural beliefs and customs resulted in stress. The stress was due to the isolation which is informed by the cultural belief that the widow is polluted with the 'curse of death', thus stigmatizing her.

Guzana (2004) highlights the tensions that are brought about by the practice. For example, the wearing of mourning clothes (visibility) by the widow is supposed to 'protect' the widow. People are supposed to respect someone in mourning and men are not supposed to approach a widow (Guzana, 2004; Manyedi et al., 2003; Mtshemla, 2005). But, due to the fact that people know a widow inherits money from the husband, via insurance, a widow tends to draw the attention of 'predatory others' such as criminals and men interested in having a relationship with her with the view to having access to her finances. As a result, widows do not feel safe. Thus the

constant 'visibility' of the widow, which 'culture' imposes to supposedly protect her works against the purpose of protecting her. This 'protection' narrative emerged in the data and was used as justification for the widow's visibility. As a result of these tensions, Guzana (2004) calls for a debate that could lead to a way of observing this cultural practice in such a way that it will be owned and upheld with pride and conviction by AmaXhosa women, rather than be practiced out of compulsion.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has drawn attention to a range of approaches to mourning, distinguishing those with clinical interest, mostly grief theories, which focus on the bereaved individual's intrapsychic struggle to come to terms with the loss from those that focus on the various cultural expectations of mourning. The former put emphasis on severance of bonds with the deceased as resolution of the grief, whilst newer ones, for example, narrative, favour continuation of bonds with the deceased through such practices as 're-membering' and 'saying hello again'.

Other approaches put emphasis on mourning as the cultural expression of grief, highlighting public expressions thereof, informed by cultural beliefs and the consequences of non-adherence. They also examine the social and economic impact of the culturally mediated mourning on the remaining spouse. Some of the approaches problematize gender issues attendant on cultural expressions, for example, visibility of the widow, deprivation of property rights, loss of social status, marginalization and suffering various forms of discrimination and stigmatization by widows. Others highlight issues of oppression, dominion and control of widows through the practice (e.g. Cattell, 2003 & Sossou, 2002).

The current research was interested in taking up the issues surrounding the genderedness of the practice, how it has been constructed over time and the discourses informing the genderedness, which centred on the displaying of 'cultural' signs of mourning, especially the visibility of the widow. 'Culture' turned out to be the mechanism that was used to pressurize the widow to conform to the displaying of mourning by invoking 'cultural beliefs and customs' whilst simultaneously leaving the widower off the hook. Some of the 'cultural' expectations were viewed as

stigmatizing and discriminatory against the widow (e.g. Mayedi et al., 2003; Sossou, 2002). The following chapter focuses on the various approaches to understanding the concept of 'culture'.

## CHAPTER 4: 'CULTURE'

### INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter on mourning, it emerged that the social practice of mourning is mediated by culture, and thus differs from one cultural group to another. As indicated earlier on, this thesis examines constructions of the social practice of spousal mourning in a specific cultural group, namely, the AmaXhosa. Therefore, their understandings of death and the rituals associated with it are implicated. These understandings were briefly considered in the context chapter, for example, the ancestors who are 'the living dead' were introduced in the section dealing with 'AmaXhosa belief system', and also in the chapter on mourning, when dealing with *ukuzila*, the specific type of mourning that the AmaXhosa engage in. Included in this explanation was the use of rituals which are carried out in to rid the mourners of the pollution which is believed to be caused by death. What is culture then?

With Psychology being a sharply divided discipline (Cole, 1997), the answer to this question is not straightforward. Almost 20 years ago, Lonner and Malpaas (1994) identified about 175 definitions of 'culture' in the social sciences. 'Culture' thus is a complex, non-unitary, problematic and contested concept (Shi-xu, 2002; Triandis, 1997). Researchers hold various assumptions about the nature of the relationship between the individual and 'culture'. How one defines culture is dependent on the underlying assumptions one makes about this relationship. The lack of consensus about these assumptions has, therefore, resulted in there being different approaches from which culture has been addressed in the discipline of Psychology. For example, some view culture as fixed (e.g. Ufomata, 2000). This view of culture portrays it as something bounded and capable of being possessed and preserved. In addition, 'culture' is reified and given subject status whereby it has power to influence people. Others have indicated its use as a construct (for example, Triandis, 1997) because of the fluid nature of 'culture' and the fact that it is not "homogenous but always exists in situated, dynamic, largely discursive versions, and hence is always in tension...constantly in a process of being constructed and reconstructed" (Geertz,

1973, p. 29). Culture is viewed by some as material products or artefacts (Triandis, 1997), and as a system of shared meanings (Geertz, 1973).

In keeping with the theoretical framework within which this research is located, my understandings of ‘culture’ are that it is a construct(ion) rather than an entity. As such, culture can be constructed and reconstructed and this points to the hybridised ways in which culture can be practised. In this research, participants spoke of practising mourning in hybridised ways. For example, due to being a nurse, one of the participants could not put on the ‘clothes of mourning’ and her mourning period was reduced from the normative one year to two weeks as she could not absent herself from work for too long.

Furthermore, as a construct(ion), people may appropriate culture at certain times and invoke it to achieve certain ends. These may be positive or negative: legitimating certain actions or marginalising others, such as invoking culture to marginalise gay people, by declaring that homosexuality is not African (Ratele, 2007). Hence, one can talk of the uses and abuses of culture. For example, when the South African president Jacob Zuma was facing a rape trial, he invoked isiZulu culture to justify why he had had a condom-less sexual relationship with an HIV positive person (SAPA, 2006). The president claimed that his isiZulu culture had inculcated in him the belief that leaving a woman sexually aroused was unacceptable and he could be accused of rape should he not follow through. The president was subsequently acquitted on the rape charges.

In this study, the participants drew on various notions of culture. Some saw it as something dynamic, as implied in the changing and various expressions of mourning through ‘visibility by clothing’; others invoked an individualistic notion of culture, whereby individuals choose what they want from the toolkit of culture, exhibited by those who chose to ‘mourn by heart’. These aspects of mourning are discussed in more detail in the analysis chapter that examines the constructions of spousal mourning.

This chapter outlines the various approaches to ‘culture’ in Psychology as a discipline as well as the assumptions underlying them. The first is the mainstream approach, so

called due to the rootedness of Psychology in the natural science model, in which Psychology sought to mimic the 'scientific' method of the natural sciences by separating context from the 'real' phenomena under investigation (Lonner & Malpaas, 1997). In this approach, 'culture' is considered an impediment to the study of psychological phenomena. The General/Mainstream approach was followed by the Cross-cultural Psychology approach, which seeks to incorporate context by investigating human behaviour from a cultural perspective, examining the effect of various cultural conditions on psychological phenomena. The chapter then discusses Cultural Psychology which finds fault with Cross-cultural Psychology for separating culture from the individual when investigating psychological phenomena across 'cultures'. Cultural Psychology subsequently regards cultural and psychological processes as inseparable, upholding the view that the mind is shaped by culture and culture is shaped by the mind (Cole, 1997). This section also includes the different approaches under the broad field of 'Cultural Psychology'. The final section discusses postcolonial understandings of 'culture'. In the section that follows, these approaches as well their underlying assumptions about the nature of the relationship between individual human behaviour and 'culture' will be closely examined.

#### GENERAL/MAINSTREAM PSYCHOLOGY

Historically, within mainstream Psychology, which draws off a natural science model, the individual was portrayed as bounded, independent and autonomous. Within this approach, culture was likened to a veneer or onion skin (Geertz, 1973) that envelopes the real person beneath it. The basic assumption was that by peeling off the layers of 'culture', one can reach the essence of the person, that is, the psychological factors lying beneath it (Shweder (1991/1999) The approach thus held a universalistic view of people whereby psychological process are assumed to be identical from culture to culture (Berry, Poortinga, Segall & Dasen,1992). This critique still holds, with researcher indicating that within mainstream Psychology, the individual is viewed as independent of contextual factors such as cultural-social and historical moorings and as able to make his or her own choices in his/ her thinking and behaviour (Bhatia & Stam, 2005; Mkhize, 2004).

Thus culture is viewed as an impediment (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock & Misra, 1996) to the psychological universals that lie beneath it. The assumption is that psychological processes are fixed and “deeply hidden” within individuals. Shweder (1991/1999, p. 4) refers to this assumption as the principle of “psychic unity” of humankind. According to Shweder (1999, p. 5) this principle does not mean people are the same in every respect, but that “transcendentally, “deep down” or “inside”, where the “universal property of the human psyche” or central processing mechanism (CPM) of mental life lives, people are the same. Contexts, resources, values, meanings, religion, rituals, language, technologies and institutions are considered to be external to the CPM. General/Mainstream Psychology assumes that its “subject matter is a presupposed abstract and hidden central processing mechanism which is fixed and universal in all human beings, and which enables them to think, experience, act and learn” (Shweder, 1999, p. 4).

The problem is assuming that these psychological processes of thinking and learning can be separated from their context. The conceptualisation of culture as an impediment adopted by General/Mainstream Psychology thus strips persons of their cultural particularities. In contrast, and in line with the theoretical framework adopted in this research, the position held in this research is that people’s thought processes, experiences and actions are already saturated with context, including the cultural context. By implication, rather than unity of mind, the view held is that of divergence as the mind and culture “make each other up” (Shweder, 1990, p.1).

The aim of General/Mainstream Psychology is therefore to describe this ‘universal property of the human psyche’, or CPM of mental life, “untainted by content and context by getting behind superficial appearances, local manifestations (onion skin) and external resources to abstract the intrinsic CPM of the mental life and describe the invariant laws of its operation” (Shweder, 1991, p. 5). This universality principle has been referred to as ‘culture blind’ (Lonner & Malpaas, 1997) because it pays minimal attention to the ways in which social and cultural practices constitute human experience. Practically, this means that factors not generally found in the ‘West’, where General/Mainstream Psychology originated, have been ignored in spite of their influence on people’s behaviour in the other contexts.

Regarding mourning, as indicated in the previous chapter, Freud's psychoanalytic theory of mourning is a classic example of the mainstream approaches which focus on the dynamics of the internal world of the mourner. Such theories assume the universal nature of mourning and regard it as individual, private and subjective, without any consideration for the social and cultural practices within which the experiences occur (Shi-xu, 2002). Further, they expect the same symptoms from all those in mourning, and subsequently pathologise any deviations as indicated in the previous chapter. Whereas these theories view mourning as an individual phenomenon, in some cultures, mourning is communal, as indicated in the chapter on mourning. The influence of culture on psychological phenomena is thus regarded as superficial and this aspect is taken up by some researchers as part of the critique of mainstream psychology, for example, Cole (1997) and Rose (1996b).

The assumption of universalism within General/Mainstream Psychology, namely, that we are all fundamentally the same regardless of culture, has been criticised on the grounds that it does not offer any basis for political action against oppression and inequality (Bhatia & Stam, 2005; Thornton, 2000). For example, by assuming mourning to be experienced by people in the same manner, across culture, race and gender, these contextual factors, which have implications for how mourning unfolds, are left unchallenged, together with the power relations inherent in them. As stated in the previous chapter, some cultural practices pertaining to widowhood and the mourning process have been viewed as oppressive (Cattell, 2003; Guzana, 2004; Magudu, 2004; Manyedi et al., 2003). Cross-cultural psychology, discussed below emerged as a result of General/Mainstream Psychology's failure to incorporate contextual factors in its study of psychological phenomena. It thus takes into account the influence of 'culture' on psychological phenomena.

## CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Cross-cultural Psychology is a sub-discipline of mainstream psychology that seeks to compare cultures. It has been given different definitions some of which are outlined below. According to Segal, Dansen, Berry & Poortinga (1990, p. 1) cross cultural psychology is:

The scientific study of human behaviour and its transmission, taking into account the ways in which behaviours are shaped and influenced by social and cultural forces.

This definition centres our attention on the diversity of behaviour within different cultures and the connection between individual behaviour and the cultural context in which it occurs, that is, within a specific culture. From this definition the sub-discipline of Cross-cultural Psychology seems quite simple; however, Eckensberger's (1972, p. 100) early definition shows more complexities and new facets to the understandings of what Cross-cultural Psychology is:

Cross cultural psychological research...is the explicit, systematic comparison of psychological variables under different cultural conditions in order to specify the antecedents and processes that mediate the emergence of behaviour differences.

This definition implies that Cross-cultural Psychology looks at the cause and effect relationship between culture and behaviour – specifically the antecedents and processes that mediate behaviour. The founding premise of this approach is that culture is an antecedent variable or package of variables (Bhatia & Ram, 2004; Eckensberger, 1972). This view distinguishes two levels of analysis, namely, the individual and the cultural and attempts to explain the relationship between them by identifying what aspects of 'culture' affect individuals. Put differently, this approach breaks culture down into a set of variables and treats these as independent variables, and the individual as the dependent variable. The aim then is to investigate the effects of cultural factors on psychological factors, thus leading to comparisons across cultures. In addition, this view follows more positivist and mainstream approaches in psychology and is the dominant paradigm used in Cross-cultural Psychology.

Both Cross-cultural Psychology and General/Mainstream Psychology aim to characterise the inherent CPM of mental life, and both presume the principle of 'psychic unity' (Shweder, 1999/1999). There is often an assumption that psychological theories are universal and that they can describe or can be used to explain behaviour and experience across cultural contexts. As pointed out earlier, this is the sense in which psychology has been said to be "culturally blind". Researchers within the sub discipline import the general psychologist's tests and research procedures and use them across cultures for comparison purposes (Veroff &

Goldberger, 1995). For example, a cross-cultural psychologist may be interested in determining whether the phases of mourning based on Kubler-Ross's (1989) five stages of dying are universal across a variety of cultures. The Cross-cultural psychologist would then be interested in the cultural differences, if any.

The initial task set by Cross-cultural Psychologists was to look for universality across cultures (Triandis, Malpass & Davidson, 1972), that is, that which might be psychologically common in the human species as well as diversity. Furthermore, Cross-cultural Psychology is concerned with accounting for individual and group differences in psychological characteristics as a function of cultural factors as well as studying behaviour resulting from contact between cultures (Berry, Poortiga, Segall & Dasen, 2002). A hypothetical example would be doing research among 'Black' and 'White' South Africans on risky behaviours associated with HIV/Aids, as well as 'ethnic psychology', comparing these among AmaZulu, AmaXhosa, and BaSotho etc. Cross-cultural Psychologists believe that they will eventually discover the underlying psychological processes that are characteristic of *homo sapiens* as a whole and is therefore in this way similar to General /Mainstream Psychology (Berry et al., 2002).

Culture is therefore investigated as though it were static and measurable. The view of culture as static permits for generalizations about different groups of people and societies. These generalisations tend not to be altered even in the wake of dramatic social and technological changes (Veroff & Goldeberger, 1995). For example, one may generalize that the AmaXhosa are a people characterized by deep belief in ancestors, as pointed out in the context section. However, due to socio-political influences, such as colonialism and the arrival of missionaries, not all AmaXhosa ascribe to this belief system. In this view, 'culture' seems deterministic regarding the nature of the individual members, thereby promoting a view of cultural homogeneity.

Cross-cultural Psychology set out to test the generality of existing psychological knowledge and theories (Berry et al., 2002). Berry et al., (2002) argued that cross-cultural psychology is conducted by making use of data collected from 'various peoples' throughout the world to test hypotheses concerning human behaviour. This has been supported by Segal et al. (1990) who highlighted Cross-cultural Psychology's quest for universal applications and understandings of psychological

theories (just like General/Mainstream Psychology). Berry et al., (2002) have referred to this goal as the *transport and test* goal, which seeks to transport ideas, concepts and hypotheses developed in one context, usually a 'Western' one, and testing them in a 'Third World' context for their universality, diversity and applicability in other groups of people. For example, it has been locally established that items presented early and late in a memory study - primacy and recency effects, are more often remembered by individuals (Nicholas, 2003), and one may wish to test if this is applicable to all cultures. This requires one to start with what one sees in a particular culture and then investigate its universality to specific other cultures. The problem is that this may lead to looking down upon other cultures, pathologising them, and therefore perpetuating unequal power relations. This is known as ethnocentrism.

The problem with Cross cultural Psychology is that it splits up and compartmentalizes culture. This leads to reductionism and the production of a simplistic view of human life. It provides small pieces of data that reflect temporary states and not the processes that lie behind cultural and psychological life (Cole, 1998). Culture is therefore investigated as if it is fixed and static. In the following section, we examine an approach that takes into consideration the processes that underlie cross-cultural psychological life, namely, cultural psychology.

## CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Cultural Psychology emerged from the shortcomings of the 'cognitive revolution' which, according to Shweder (1991/1999) failed to develop a satisfactory theory of the person, by reducing the mind to that of the working of a computer. This was found to be dehumanising and contrary to the original plan of cognitive science, which was of the mind as a meaning making process (Cole, 1997).

There were several elements in the emergence of Cultural Psychology, each of which will be outlined below. Veroff and Goldberger (1995) foregrounded cultural particularities and defined Cultural Psychology as the study of particular cultures and groups to determine the relationship between the structure, values and belief systems, myths, language and practices of culture and the behaviour of individuals living in the culture. Their definition of Cultural Psychology thus acknowledged the importance of

culture and context. Cole's (1997) definition put culture at the core rather than at the periphery. Cole (1997) defined Cultural Psychology as the enterprise that seeks to examine the way culture shapes individual human natures or psychological processes in the same way as biology and society. He stated that Cultural Psychology is the study of the culture's role in the mental life of human beings. Price-Williams (1979, p.14) defined it as "that branch of inquiry that explores the contextual behaviour of psychological processes". Shweder (1991/1999) asserted that the idea of Cultural Psychology is that individuals and traditions, psyches and cultures, make each other up, that one does not exist independently of the other. Put differently, Cultural Psychology holds the idea that culture and mind are intricately linked up and therefore cannot be separated into variables as done in Cross-cultural Psychology.

From the above definitions, socio-cultural context is therefore viewed as an integral part of mental or psychological functioning (Cole, 1997; Swartz & Rohleder, 2008) in Cultural Psychology. For example, a cultural psychologist may be interested in how social practices of a particular set of cultures shape the development of cognitive processes in different ways. The following section examines culture as a process, thus alluding to its non-static nature.

### *Culture as process*

In contrast to Cross cultural Psychology, culture within Cultural Psychology can be understood as a socially interactive process in which cultural and psychological processes cannot be separated. Humans invent, perpetuate, transmit and change culture and are in turn changed by it (Swartz & Rohleder, 2008). From this perspective, culture is not outside the person, nor is the person outside culture. As Geertz (1975, P. 49) argues:

There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture. Men (sic) without culture...would be unworkable monstrosities with very few instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect: mental basket cases...symbols are thus not mere expressions, instrumentalities, or correlates of our biological, psychological or social existence: they are prerequisites for it.

In other words, it is culture that makes us human. Culture is not just an ornament of existence, a veneer or skin (Bhatia & Ram, 2004); it is basic condition of life. “There is no such a thing as a human nature independent of culture” (Geertz, 1975, p. 49).

This view of culture underlies Cultural Psychology, in which it is argued that the person and culture cannot be analytically separated or temporally ordered into independent and dependent variables (Bhatia & Ram, 2004). Cultural Psychology thus offers a critique of Cross-cultural Psychology as it leads one to look at how culture makes the person and the person makes culture. From this perspective, one needs to focus on activities instead of causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. Consider Shweder’s (1991, p. 73) definition of cultural psychology as “the study of the ways subject and object, self and other, psyche and culture, person and context, figure and ground, practitioner and practice live together, require each other, and dynamically, dialectically, and jointly make each other up”.

Cultural Psychology, therefore, is concerned with the ‘meaning-making process’ (Brunner, 1998) which plays a central role in all human action (activities, e.g. mourning) and experience. In this research, the participants were engaged in this meaning-making process in relations to how spousal mourning is practiced by men and women within a specific cultural context. This significance of culture for understanding human behaviour and experience is of major import to cultural psychology.

A linked view of Cultural Psychology is that to actually study the human mind one has to gain an understanding of it through studying its cultural products - products of human life such as artefacts we create and use, for example, works of art, paintings, books, technology, clothing, architecture etc (Bhatia & Ram, 2004; Hiles, 1996). Indeed, at one point in the research, I wondered whether it would be possible to access archival material (photographs, clothes of mourning) to triangulate the data. Due to the taboo around death among the AmaXhosa and the burning of ‘clothes of mourning’ as part of the termination ceremony (*khulula*), no such material could be accessed and so this aspect of the research could not be carried out.

In Cultural Psychology, the mind, psyche and culture are regarded as essentially interdependent and seamlessly interconnected, with the one shaping the other (for example, by Bhatia & Ram, 2004; Cole, 1998; and Shweder, 1991). As such, Cultural Psychology is concerned with some of the very basic issues about human nature. In focusing on the meaning-making process, Cultural Psychology is concerned with the meaning-exchange and the meaning-circulation process (Bruner, 1998). The contexts this provides for human behaviour and experience is essential to the establishment of identity, both collective and individual. Although there is an underlying common conceptualisation in the broad field of Cultural Psychology, there are also different approaches. These are outlined in the following section.

### *Approaches to Cultural Psychology*

The approaches dealt with in this section are the symbolic approach, the cultural-historical activity theory and the individualistic approach. The symbolic approach, advocated initially by Geertz (1973), is the predominant approach to cultural psychology. It defines culture as shared symbols, concepts, meanings and linguistic terms. These include books, diagrams, pictures, television and other artefacts. Furthermore, these are socially constructed in the sense of being produced by individuals in concert. Cultural symbols are regarded as organizing psychological phenomena. They do so by labelling and categorizing information and directing responses in particular ways. Highlighting the usefulness of the symbolic approach, Geertz, (1973, p. 246) had this to say:

Undirected by cultural patterns - organized systems of significant symbols - [human] behaviour would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, [our] experience virtually shapeless. Culture, the accumulated totality of such patterns, is not just an ornament (vener) of human existence but the principle basis of its specificity - an essential condition of it.

He thus alludes to the regulatory nature of culture.

Cultural-historical activity theory, first articulated by Vygotsky (1978), argues that psychological phenomena such as thinking are not something that goes on in the mind, but emerge as people engage in socially organized activity. Practical, socially organized activity is the primary cultural influence on psychology, thus pointing out the social origin of thought processes (Gilbert, 1997; Mkhize, 2004; Wood, 1998).

Knowledge is “borne out of engaging in everyday activities” (Gilbert, 1997, p. 275). The work of Vygotsky and his concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a case in point. Engaging with others is considered as key in shaping the mind. In any social practice, the more experienced or the more capable other, mediates experience for the less experienced. In this way, the less experienced person/s will learn new ways of thinking and practice them before mastering them (Gilbert, 1997). To sum up this approach:

Knowledge is embodied in the actions, work, play, technology, literature, art and talk of members of a society. Only through interaction with the living representatives of ‘culture’, what Bruner terms the ‘vicars of culture’, can a child come to acquire, embody and further develop that knowledge (Wood, 1998, p. 38).

As a result, psychological phenomena are acquired by engaging in different life activities rather than by simple imitation.

The individualistic approach, a fairly new approach in cultural psychology, highlights individual characteristics which mediate culture (Ratner, 2008). Advocates of this approach regard the individual as resourceful enough to select what they want from the toolkit of culture. In this approach, therefore, the individual is viewed as the user of culture rather than culture being an imposition on individuals. Culture according to the individualistic approach is defined as the result of a negotiated interaction between an individual and social ‘institutions-conditions’ (Ratner, 2008). Since the individual makes a contribution via the negotiations and selections made, the individual ‘co-constructs’ culture, and constructs a personal culture based on his or her own experience. In this research, data revealed that some widows were operating from this perspective. Although cultural norms indicated specific ways to mourn, such as by wearing ‘clothes of mourning’, some widows chose to mourn in their own way, for example, ‘by heart’.

## POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM AND CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Postcolonial feminism’s understandings of culture, in line with Cultural Psychology, uphold the multiplicity of notions of culture and the cultural embeddedness of individuals. Postcolonial feminist researchers foreground the intersection of culture

with issues of colonisation, gender and race, thus linking culture to power relations. Furthermore, postcolonial feminist researchers examine culture from the lens of “marginality, minoritization, oppression and resistance” (Bhatia & Stam, 2005, p. 425).

Kiguwa (2004) draws attention to how gender as a cultural construct can be manipulated as a tool of oppression to rationalize and preserve gender inequalities. In this study, cultural values of respect/*hlonipha* and *ukwenda* were invoked by participants in their explanations of the differential treatment of men and women in *ukuzila*. This is an example of how culture can be used to justify gender discrimination, with men enjoying cultural privilege whilst women are marginalised.

Culture may be appropriated and invoked by people at certain times in order to achieve certain ends. Concerning colonial and postcolonial contexts, Bhatia (2002) has highlighted how culture in these contexts was used to justify oppression. ‘Western’ culture was regarded as superior, whilst that of ‘non-Westerners’ was viewed as inferior and primitive. This distinction stems from the characterisation of culture as split from the individual, and the attribution of subject status to culture as a bounded entity out there with abilities such as causing things to happen. The categorising of ‘Western’ culture as superior to the ‘non-Westerners’ was used to justify colonization on the basis that “it is quite fair for these groups with ‘simple cultures’ to give their rights and freedom to superior European groups” (Spencer 1851/1969 in Bhatia, 2002, p. 382). The lingering presence and domination by the colonialists in postcolonial settings has been referred to as “cultural imperialism” (Said, 1993, in Bhatia, 2002, p. 389).

In Psychology, the continued presence of colonialism manifests itself in issues of representation and ethnocentric bias. Issues of representation were covered in the theoretical framework chapter and encompass the description of ‘non-Westerners’ by ‘Westerners’, using research methodologies and procedures that are not compatible with local cultures. The conclusions reached thus contribute to “the marginalisation of the lived experiences of others” (Hook, 2004, p. 16). Ethnocentric bias involves defining the ‘other’ from one’s point of view. This has been largely a one-way process, in which knowledge, ideas, values and practices from the ‘West’ have been

imposed on the 'non-Westerners'. This process is reflective of unequal power relations as the way in which the 'dominant culture' of the 'First World' is inhabited and characterised by 'non-Westerners' / 'Third World' " is hardly acknowledged (Macleod, 2006). An example of ethnocentric bias is the use of Eurocentric norms in psychological tests (Bhatia, 2002; Mkhize, 2004), in which, cultural particularities of the 'other' are not taken into account, resulting in the homogenous description of the 'other'.

The abovementioned objections by postcolonialist theorists to 'Western'/'First World' psychology are consistent with the goals of Cultural Psychology. Cultural Psychology aims to foreground issues of diversity, heterogeneity and multiplicity in various cultures and within cultures. In addition, Cultural Psychology maintains the embeddedness of psychological knowledge in social, cultural and historical contexts (Cole, 1997; Shweder, 1991/1999). A feminist postcolonial stance offers to restore power imbalances by attending to the issues related to marginalised 'Third World' woman, thus recognising their particularities and the "heterogeneities of the lives of 'Third World' women" (Mohanty, 1995, p. 260).

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the complexities of conceptualising culture due to it being a complex, problematic and contested concept have been highlighted. The various understandings of culture were elaborated on, especially focusing on General/Mainstream psychology, Cross-cultural Psychology and Cultural Psychology.

General/Mainstream Psychology treated culture as something superficial and, therefore, not of any worth in studying psychological phenomena, which were assumed to be universal. This was part of its legacy from the natural sciences which tend to simplify things in order to get to the 'essences', in this case, the mind as a general processing device. This kind of thinking was linked to psychological theories of grief that hold the same universalist orientations. Freud's grief theory was cited as a case in point as it disregards culture in its theorising of grief.

Cross-cultural Psychology attempted to fill this gap by bringing in culture when studying psychological variables. The shortcoming of Cross-cultural Psychology was its treatment and investigation of culture as a bounded entity, its separation of the individual and culture into variables independent of each other, and its homogenising of the culture of the specific people it compared.

Cultural Psychology closes this gap by conceptualising culture as intricately intertwined with humans and their thinking, as ‘making each other up’; citing the fact that “nothing exists independent of our involvement with it” (Shwedder, 1999, p. 6). Consequently, Cultural Psychology offers that cultures be studied in their particularities. The various approaches within the broad field of Cultural Psychology were discussed.

Postcolonial feminism’s understandings of culture, and its link to how Cultural Psychology views culture, were discussed. This discussion underscored the link between culture and power. In addition, the issue of how people appropriate culture to achieve certain ends, such as to marginalise women on the basis of gender was also addressed.

In this research, Cultural Psychology is the preferred stance due to the fact that it pays attention to particularities of ‘culture’. Pluralities exist not only among cultures but also within ‘cultures’ themselves. Thus, in the context section of this thesis, the various factors that have shaped the identities of the AmaXhosa were covered. These contributed to the heterogeneous nature of the AmaXhosa’s identity and this is how they are investigated in this research. The theoretical framework adopted in this research dovetails with this conceptualisation of culture. Diversity, multiplicity and contingency of ‘identity’ are key concepts of in this framework. These are considered as having serious implications in how people construct spousal mourning. Any conceptualisation of identity as homogenous thereby excluding these concepts masks the workings of power. The exposure of power imbalances in connection with how people’s identities are constructed is considered as an important aspect in the theoretical framework adopted in this research. In the following chapter, the methodological procedures employed to undertake the research activity are described.

## **CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study made use of thematic analysis and a discourse analytic methodology to analyze text emanating from discussions of spousal mourning. These texts were collected from focus group discussions with people of different age groups, gender and geographical location as well as from interviews with widows, widowers and key cultural informants. The interviews and focus groups were centred on the issue of spousal mourning among the AmaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. The aim of the study was to investigate the participants' constructions of spousal mourning, identify and interpret discourses emanating from the constructions and the power relations formed by the discourses as well as the 'subject positions' embedded in the discourses. A further aim of the study was to investigate how the discourses were resisted.

A combination of thematic analysis and discourse analysis was used for the purpose of addressing the various aspects of the research questions. In order to shed light on the first research question concerning the constructions of *ukuzila* for men and women, and on the second research question on how the practice of spousal mourning is constructed by the AmaXhosa as a historical versus as a contemporary practice, thematic analysis was employed. Uses of thematic analysis include the identification, analysis and reporting on the patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). The themes that emerged from discussions of the first two research questions were then used as the basis for performing discourse analysis, using Parker's (1992 & 2005) criteria for analysing discourse (see further discussion later on in this chapter). Uses of discourse analysis differ according to the theoretical tradition of the researcher. For example, it can be used to "clarify the linguistic resources used to make things happen" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 171), and the effects thereof. For Parker (2005), discourse analysis may be used to investigate how texts are constructed, with the aim of unseating such constructions and exposing the power relations at work.

Discourse analysis is an orientation to research that describes a broad range of perspectives embedded in diverse theoretical and methodological affiliations. Parker (1999) has mentioned that the variety of approaches to discourse analysis is bewildering. Gill (2000) has grouped them into critical linguistics, social semiotics, critical language studies; speech-act theory, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, social constructionism/post structuralism as well as postcolonial forms of discourse analysis. In this study, the methodological approach adopted is that of post-structuralism.

Within psychology, the analysis of discourse has been employed to address a wide range of issues. Examples include the notion of attitudes (Durrheim & Dixon, 2004; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), gender (Davies & Eagle, 2007; Hollway, 1989; Macleod, 1995), gender and HIV/Aids (Strebel, 2000), teenage pregnancy (Macleod, 1999), indigenous healing (Yen & Wilbraham, 2003) and racism (Lea, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; van Dyk, 1984). This study utilized the poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis espoused by Parker (1992 / 2005). His criteria for identifying discourses were employed in order to analyse discourses used in talk about mourning, as well as his additional criteria for the purpose of analyzing the power relations related to spousal mourning. Poststructuralism proposes a useful and dynamic framework whereby power relations in society are explored, analyzed and critiqued with the view to the possibility for social change (Weedon, 1997). The key theoretical concepts of poststructuralism that the current research draws on include power relations, visibility and surveillance, representation and location(ality), hybridity and positioning theory. These theoretical concepts were discussed in the chapter dealing with the theoretical framework

Similar to discourse analysis, the term discourse is subject to multiple definitions, with the various approaches to discourse analysis having different conceptualizations of discourses, their scope, how they function and how they should be analyzed (Wood & Kroger, 2000). For example, with reference to the conception of discourse as constitutive of the social world, there are disagreements as to the degree of constitution, whether fully or partially. This aspect is addressed in the section dealing with various notions of discourse covered later on in this chapter.

Although there are a variety of discourse analytic approaches, there is a strong consensus around primacy of language in social life “as the site for investigating social psychological issues” (Hollway, 1989, p32). According to Burman, Kottler, Levett and Parker (1997, p. 7), “language constitutes who we are, constructs the positions we occupy, is the medium by which we interact with other people and understand ourselves”. From the above quote, it is noticeable that social meanings and identities are constructed and contested in language. Consequently, Parker’s (2005) analysis attends to the social and political consequences of such constructions and Potter and Wetherell’s version (1987) is focused on analyzing how language is utilized as a form of action, doing things and the effects thereof. As a result, language becomes the unit of analysis rather than the individual. This can be contrasted to traditional psychological research which puts the individual at the centre, as the unit of analysis. Language is viewed as ambiguous and unstable. This conception of language can be contrasted with the view of language as a reflection of a pre-existing, independent reality or as merely a tool for description and as a neutral medium of communication (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Seale, 2004; Wood & Krog, 2000).

In line with the primacy of language in discourse analysis, discourse analysts utilize as their basic data such things as transcribed interview recordings, recordings of naturally occurring conversations, newspaper articles, material from visual media and physical settings (Parker, 2005). Data in this research were comprised of the transcribed interview recordings and the focus group discussions.

The next part of this chapter undertakes the task of looking at the different understandings of discourse as proposed by various researchers. Then the aims of discourse analysis as understood by various researchers are explored. This is followed by a brief exposition on the interrelated term, text. Parker (1992/2005) proposes that a valuable aspect of discourse analysis is reflexivity, a practice which the researcher is urged to undertake. This aspect of discourse analysis will also be dealt with. The last part of the chapter describes the research design, the participants and the procedures followed in conducting and analysing the study.

## UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE NOTION OF DISCOURSE

As noted earlier, the term discourse is a highly contested one, with the various perspectives attaching different meanings to what discourses are, what they cover and their role. In turn, these have implications for how discourses should be analyzed. The following paragraph outlines some of the notions held by different authors concerning discourse.

Writing from a poststructural perspective, Foucault (1972, p. 49) has defined discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”. This study draws heavily on Foucault’s poststructuralist work, including his conception of discourse. Parker (1992, p. 5 & 2005, p. 145), propositions a definition of discourse as “a system of statements which constructs an object” which he then augments with seven criteria for identifying discourses. These are then supplemented with three criteria which relate discourse analysis to ideology and power. Burr (1995, p. 48) settles for examples, illustrations and analogies that when assembled present a meaning for discourse and thus describe discourse as “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events.” Others have variously described discourse/s as:

- “all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 7).
- “all spoken and written forms of language use as social practice” (Wood & Krog, 2000, p. 19);
- “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 19);
- “sets of historicized, overtly institutionalized statements (and practices) which constitute the objects they describe, address subjects in particular ways, and reproduce power relations and ideological effects” (Wilbraham, 2004, p. 495)
- “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic” (Hall, 1992, p. 290).

These multiple understandings of discourse then necessitate that we do not use discourse “in an unreflective way” (Sutherland, 2004, p. 6).

In this study, a distinction between discourse and text as proposed by Parker (1992/2005) was maintained. One of the research questions sought to identify the discourses drawn on by the participants in their constructions of spousal mourning. The text in the form of the transcribed material was used in order to identify the discourses operating in or through the text. The statements made by participants provided the various ways in which *ukuzila* was constructed and the discourses inscribed in these constructions were then identified. Burr’s (1995, p. 48) conceptualization of discourses, outlined earlier on, was also drawn on. The various ways in which men and women were represented in the texts, for example, men as ‘sexual predators’ and women as ‘targets’ in need of protection paved the way for identifying the discourse/s in operation, specifically the male sexual drive discourse (MSD).

With reference to discourses as “sets of historicized, overtly institutionalized statements (and practices) which constitute the objects they describe, address subjects in particular ways” (Wilbraham, 2004, p. 495), the historical nature of the identified discourses, their embeddedness in the family institution and how power relations were reproduced were also considered. With reference to the historical nature of the identified discourses, in this research, how people construct *ukuzila* as a historical versus as a contemporary practice was one of the research questions. These historical renditions were of interest in terms of how they might be used as justification of current practices.

Concerning the constitutive nature of discourses, contention arises as to whether they are wholly or partially constitutive. Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) discourse theory asserts that discourse itself is fully constitutive and that individuals are considered as entirely subjects of discourse. Foucault’s (1972) concept of discourse also foregrounds the fully constitutive role of discourse. In contrast, critical discourse analysis’s (CDA) conception of discourse takes into consideration the extra-discursive, whilst it also places weight on the constitutive role of discourse. Discourses from this perspective are thus seen as partially constitutive. The manner in which discourses are intertwined with materiality as postulated by CDA calls for

the inclusion of socio-structural variables in their analysis, with the purpose of revealing how social relations of power and domination emanating from these are naturalized through language (Wood & Kroger, 2000). CDA's distinction between discourse and the extra-discursive has been attributed to its links with more traditional Marxism (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Some feminists, for example, Hollway (1995) and Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1995), advocate for the distinction between the discursive and the extra-discursive in order to allow a space for the theorization of emancipatory practice.

In discursive psychology the emphasis is on individuals both as products and users of discourse, thus simultaneously recognizing the constitutive power of discourse and people's ability to exercise choice (albeit limited) in relation to discursive practices. Discursive psychology thus aims to explore how people use the available discourses in producing and negotiating representations of the world through social interaction and to offer analysis of the social effects thereof (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

In this study, no distinction is made between the discursive and the extra-discursive; the view held being that the two are so interwoven that differentiating between discursive and extra-discursive would prove problematic. This is not to deny the presence of the extra-discursive; rather, the assumption is that the extra-discursive acquires meaning only through discourse. Discourses contain subjects and construct objects (Parker, 1992). Consequently, as Parker (1992) has pointed out, once an object has been circumscribed by a discourse, it is difficult not to refer to it as if it were real. Having outlined the different notions of discourse, the following section will focus on text, "the fabric on which discourse is manifested" (Talbot, 1995a, in Sunderland, 2004, p. 24).

## TEXT

Closely linked to the notion of discourse is the term text. Text is used differently by scholars. It can be used interchangeably with discourse whilst others make a distinction between the two. Parker (1999) notion of text is understood as the fabric on which discourses are written. The aim, thus, of discourse analysis is understood as

identifying the discourses operating in the text. Text can be limited to spoken and written texts. Parker (2005, p. 124) does not restrict it to language but widens the scope to include “all kinds of symbolic material that we use to represent ourselves to each other” such as tattoos on bodies, architectural designs of security complexes. Fairclough (1993) broadens the term discourse to encompass visual images and nonverbal movements and Parker (2005, p. 147) defines texts as “delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form that can be given interpretive gloss”.

An interrelated term to text is context. The various discourse analytic perspectives conceptualize the relationship between text and context differently and this has implications for analysis. For example, CDA includes contextual categories such as race, class and gender in its analysis of data (Baxter, 2003; Wood & Krog, 2000). In contrast, poststructuralism asserts that social ‘realities’ are always discursively produced and therefore not outside text (Baxter, 2003). The meaning of the text is regarded as being already framed by context. Therefore, the distinction between text and context is collapsed in their analysis, opting instead for intertextuality. Intertextuality refers to the interconnectedness of texts, whereby texts are constantly saturated and inscribed with traces of other texts (Baxter, 2003). In this research, which draws on poststructuralism, the text is regarded as already intricately interwoven in context, in the form of historical practices and meanings. Concerning text and discourse, the view espoused by Parker (1999) is adopted, whereby discourses inhabit a text. The following section examines the various aims of discourse analysis regarding the texts to be analysed.

#### AIMS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The research practices and aims of discourse analysis differ according to strands and authors. In this section, some of the aims and practices of discourse analysis are explored.

Phillips and Jorgensen (2002, p. 7) indicates that the aim of discourse analysis from the perspective of discursive psychology is “to investigate how people use discourses flexibly in creating and negotiating representations of the world and identities in talk-in-interaction and to analyse the social consequences of this”. Potter and Wetherell

(1987, p.171) describe the main objective of discourse analysis as establishing how discourse is constructed, its functions and the consequences or effects, “to clarify the linguistic resources used to make certain things happen”. In other words, they focus on the performance of social acts through language, such as blaming, judging and affirming. Durrheim (1997) explains the aim of discourse analysis as toppling generally held conceptualisations of objects by making use of marginalized discourses with the intention of exposing the constructed character of common understandings. For Parker (2005) discourse analysts investigate the manner in which texts are constructed, the functions served by language and the contradictions that run through the text.

From the above descriptions, it can be seen that versions of discourse analysis focus their analyses on different points. These focal points involve the employment of discourse analysis by researchers to study issues relating to the construction of accounts, the identification of discourses, functions of discourses, whereby social action is achieved through discourse, and the particular effects thereof. These aims of discourse can be contrasted with those of traditional research. Whilst the latter seeks to objectively uncover the true nature of the phenomena it studies, the former attempts to explore how we create this reality so that it appears objective and natural.

In my perspective, once the discourse has been identified, it is imperative that the analysis examines its effects, the subject positions embedded in them, the power relations operating within the discourses as well as resistance to it. In addition, discourses fix certain versions as the ‘truth’, thus undermining other ways of being. In this research, for example, the major discourses identified were the ‘male sexual drive discourse’ (MSD), ‘familia-*ukwenda*’ and ‘respect-*hlonipha*’. All three construct males as subjects of a particular kind: active subjects in matters sexual in the MSD, active subjects of the familial-*ukwenda* in which they are positioned as ‘heads’ (invested with decision – making powers) and subjects to be respected in the ‘respect-*hlonipha*’. One of the aims of discourse analysis would then be to examine how these taken-for-granted notions of subjects are constituted as the ‘truth’ or ‘real’ and disrupt them. Alternative discourses would then acknowledge that women are also able to take an initiative in sexual matters, are able to make sound decisions and head households and are worthy of respect.

## REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity forms an important part of discourse analytic and feminist research. A key principle of reflexivity concerns an exploration of the researcher's role in the research process and the consequences thereof. Specifically, reflexivity recognizes that "knowledge cannot be separated from the knower" (Alwesson & Skolberg, 2000, p. 8). This recognition thus challenges the notion of value free knowledge in positivist research that is characterized by "an independent, knowable world unrelated to human perception and social practices" (Baxter, 2003, p. 50). There is, therefore, no assertion of neutrality in an attempt to represent reality as 'the truth' as proposed by the positivist empiricist tradition of science. For example, what is to be explored, the questions asked (or not asked), how these are asked and the interpretations given are informed by the researcher's choice of theory as well as the issues that are of interest to him or her. In other words, these are acknowledged as part of the research practice.

Reflexivity also involves considerations about the relationship between researchers and the researched as well as their accounts. Parker (2005, p. 32) emphasizes this relational aspect of research, arguing that "no research can be undertaken without the existence of other human beings and, in most cases, without their cooperation." In particular, this aspect refers to the power differentials between researcher and participants. To a certain extent, this entails acknowledging the personal (subjectivity) and situational influences (issues of location) that may have an effect on the research process and outcomes. The researcher and participants are variously located along socio-cultural, economic, geographical, historical, religious, ethnic, racial, class, ability, sexual orientation, age and gender lines. This stance towards reflexivity can be contrasted to the researcher in traditional research, who is stripped of all particularities such as gender, culture, position etc. For traditional research, subjectivity is considered an impediment that should be removed prior to reporting (Parker, 2005).

While researcher reflexivity is considered important in doing discourse analytic and feminist research, there has been some critique of it as well. Parker (2005) has

cautioned against the danger of reflexivity turning into a ‘confession’ whereby the use of first person accounts ends up being just ‘mere subjectivity’, and highlighting their emotional investments (good or bad feelings) about what happened in the research. He then advocates for the relational character of research as pointed out in the previous paragraph. Power relations between researcher and researched during data collection, such as differences and similarities in identity and how these could have enabled certain things to happen and foreclosed others, are considered important.

For me, the various positions in which I am located, and which could have possibly influenced my research are: a black isiXhosa speaker, middle aged, married, female South African who is a Christian, a psychologist and an academic with investment in feminist understandings, living in an urban area but with rural roots which are still maintained.

These location issues were salient at various points in my data collection as well as in the analysis. Furthermore, the choice of topic and how research and interview questions were framed was not a neutral exercise. For example, being a married woman belonging to the AmaXhosa ethnic group, in-laws have a huge influence on how a widow is to mourn, so I had a vested interest in the topic under investigation. Being a married woman implies being *mendi*, a category for a married woman that has been discussed in the context section and which will be addressed in the analysis chapters. This identity affected my degree of probing when collecting data from elderly male participants who were old enough to be my ‘father (s) in-law’ as it would be ‘culturally’ disrespectful to be persistent. The issue of respect has been identified as an important aspect in the ‘culture’ of the AmaXhosa and has been covered extensively in the analysis chapters. Its centrality in AmaXhosa ‘culture’ was highlighted in the identification of the ‘respect-*hlonipha*’ discourse at work in the constructions of *ukuzila*. Furthermore, as *mendi*, when I interviewed the elderly female cultural custodian who lives in a rural area in which she oversees a ‘cultural village’, I was aware of the cultural space I was going to. As a result, I dressed according to the appropriate dress code for a married woman. It was a very cold day and under normal circumstances I would have put on a pair of slacks, but I opted for a skirt. My cultural membership as a black isiXhosa speaking woman was thus an

internalized ‘gaze’ which put me under pressure to act ‘appropriately’. In this case I was the target of the ‘visibility’ I was investigating.

The notion of being an academic and a psychologist trained in Western as opposed to indigenous ways of knowing, smacks of being ‘Westernized’ - being a black isiXhosa speaker, one is expected to defend African renaissance. Christianity has also been blamed for acculturation. During data collection, and analysis, these issues cropped up when discussing the changes and ‘Westernization’ and ‘Christianity’ were blamed for some of the changes. Swartz, Gibson and Gelman (2002, p. 92) assert that a critical appraisal of oneself-in-action, such as collecting and analyzing data enables one to come to “an understanding of how one’s actions are formed by and from the world and others.” In this section, all the points of location raised were relevant with respect to the above quote and, therefore, needed to be made explicit in view of their implications as they possibly influenced the framing and interpretation of data.

## RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The general aim of this study was to explore the cultural practice *ukuzila*, the AmaXhosa equivalent of mourning, which also refers to spousal mourning. In particular, the study focused on the constructions of the practice and the discourses that mediated these constructions. To this end, the following research questions were posed.

### ***Research Questions***

- (i) How do men and women construct *ukuzila* (specifically spousal mourning) for  
(a) men, and (b) women?
- (ii) How is the practice of spousal mourning constructed by the AmaXhosa as a  
historical versus as a contemporary practice?
- (iii) What discourses mediate these constructions?
- (iv) How are men and women positioned in relation to the discourses of *ukuzila*?
- (v) How are the constructions of *ukuzila* resisted?

In the following paragraphs a brief elaboration on these questions is undertaken. When making use of discourse analysis, traditional research questions are phrased

differently. For example, the use of the construction metaphor with respect to the first research question implies the acceptance in poststructuralism that our ways of talking about the world vary. Therefore, discourse analysts recognize multiplicity of meaning in people's accounts, whereas traditional research in psychology tends to look for consistency through controlling for variability. In addition, traditional psychological research claims to uncover the objective nature of phenomena and make truth claims about them. The aim of this research is therefore not to establish what people 'really' mean by *ukuzila*, or which understandings are more accurate. Rather, it is to identify and explore the constructions used in describing meanings assigned to *ukuzila*.

In view of the fact that the AmaXhosa are characterized by a history of a deep-rooted patriarchal tradition (Mtuze, 1990) that is reflected in gender discriminatory practices, I wondered whether constructions regarding *ukuzila* for men would differ from constructions of *ukuzila* for women, hence the first research question. A further aim of this research therefore was to explore and analyse the power relations arising from these constructions and the meanings evoked. Given that patriarchy interlocks with other dimensions of difference and oppression such as class, religion, age and rural-urban divisions, the multiple constructions of spousal mourning were further expected to be contingent on these aspects.

There is consensus that cultures are not static but change over time. Concerning the question "how is the practice of spousal mourning constructed by the AmaXhosa as a historical versus as a contemporary practice?" Gergen (1985, p. 267) asserts that we are fundamentally historical and cultural beings and our views of, and knowledge about the world are the "products of historically situated interchanges among people". Therefore, meanings ascribed to *ukuzila* identified in the first research question are acknowledged as historically and socially specific and consequently contingent. How people understand, talk about and perform *ukuzila* will be intricately linked to their understandings of how it was practiced in the past. In other words, the researcher is not interested in what 'really' happened in the past but rather in how people *understand* what happened in the past and how this ties with their current talk on spousal mourning.

Research question four is about subject positions. In poststructuralism, the concept of individual is problematised and replaced by the 'subject', who occupies multiple, contradictory and contingent subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990; Hollway, 1984). These subject positions are embedded in discourses, are laden with power relations, producing both constraining and enabling implications for the subject. The subjects are expected to take them up and perform them. The concept of subject positions was introduced in the theoretical framework chapter and is taken up in the analysis chapter where the subject positions offered by the identified discourses are explored.

Concerning the question of resistance, Foucault (1977) has pointed out that resistance is an underside of power, that is, where power is exercised, resistance is also present. Spousal mourning / *ukuzila* is a practice that is laden with power imbalances. Therefore, in light of Foucault's notion of power, resistance is to be expected, and the interest is on the form/s that this resistance takes. The concept of resistance was introduced in the section on poststructuralism in the theoretical framework chapter and is taken up in the analysis chapter.

## ***Method***

### *Participants*

The sampling method employed was purposive as the researcher targeted certain categories of people for various perspectives on the topic. For example, focus group discussions were held with people from broad generational ranges. Separate group discussions were held with each of the following categories of people: rural elderly women with minimal or no schooling; younger women from a rural area whose level of education ranged from grade 6 to grade 11; elderly men from a rural setting with minimal/no schooling; urban elderly educated-professional women; urban educated younger women; elderly professional men, and younger men who were university students from a rural area. These various locations ensured diversity and avoided homogeneity, thus allowing for the emergence of a variety of discourses. The criterion for inclusion in the focus group discussion was that one should be knowledgeable about spousal mourning.

Widowers and widows were approached to volunteer for individual interviews. The criterion for inclusion was that the widow or widower should have undergone a period of bereavement of more than two years. Ethically, this is important as it is believed that after that period the person has completed the process of mourning and grieving (Kubler-Ross, 1969/89). In-depth interviews were held with widows and widowers: a younger and an elderly widow from a rural setting, a younger and an elderly widow from an urban setting, an elderly widower from a rural setting, as well as an elderly widower from an urban setting.

An additional in-depth interview was held with a ‘cultural custodian’ who also happened to be widowed and stays in a rural setting. A cultural custodian is someone, young or old, who is designated by members of one’s community to uphold cultural practices. In the case of this one, she has been thus designated by the Department of Arts and Culture in the Eastern Cape.

In total, 47 people participated in the research. Table 1 below provides full details.

**Table 1:** Participants' information

Data collection method	Participants	Number of participants
FG1	Elderly rural women	7
FG2	Elderly rural men	6
FG3	Younger rural women	6
FG4	Younger rural men	4
FG5	Elderly urban women	6
FG6	Elderly urban men	5
FG7	Younger urban women	5
Interview 1	Elderly rural widow	1
Interview 2	Elderly rural widower	1
Interview 3	Young rural widow	1
Interview 4	Young rural widower	1
Interview 5	Elderly urban widow	1
Interview 6	Elderly urban widower	1
Interview 7	Young urban widow	1
Interview 8	Cultural custodian (elderly rural widow: 92 years old)	1

Getting the ages of the elderly rural participants turned out to be problematic. Most of them, both men and women, did not know their dates of birth. Instead they used historic events for approximation. This is line with the traditional African practice of not recording children's birthdays; a child's time of birth is usually marked by some notable occurrence during that year (Khabela, 1996). This practice was further employed in marking other significant events like one's circumcision year or one's year of marriage. For example, one man cited that he returned from circumcision school the year Nelson Mandela (former South African president) was imprisoned. Unfortunately, there was no fixed age for going to circumcision school during his

time, although currently the minimum legal age is 18 due to the increased deaths. Hence I have not written down the ages of the participants.

The use of male and female participants was in view of research question 1 and the expectation that men and women might talk differently about the topic of spousal mourning. The use of participants from rural and urban locations was in recognition of the fact that practices of mourning may differ across these localities. Socioeconomic status, assumed to be measured by education was also factored in, in view of the fact that literature has identified economic considerations as having implications for mourning. Furthermore, the similarities and differences between the groups allowed for variability and comparison.

### *Procedures*

In order to access the participants the following procedures were undertaken. With respect to the rural participants, an appointment was made to meet with the local people in a church hall to brief them about the research. The church hall was chosen because there was no community hall (most rural areas do not have one), and the local school was not able to offer us accommodation. A presentation which offered full explanation of the nature and purpose of the research, why it was being undertaken and how confidentiality would be maintained was made. Inclusion criteria were explained as outlined in the previous section. The participants were also informed that those willing to take part in the interviews and discussions would sign consent form. A question and answer session followed to clarify anything that was unclear. A date and time was then set for the focus group discussions and interviews with the prospective participants.

For the elderly urban group, a local old age home was approached and requested to allow me to ask for volunteers. The procedure outlined above was followed. Concerning the urban group of younger participants, third year university students were approached through a notice calling for interested students to participate in the study. The nature of the study was briefly outlined in the notice. A date was then set with the participants who had indicated interest. The participants were then briefed as outlined above and a date set for the interviews.

Regarding the individual interviews, for each 'category' of person that participated in the focus group discussions, one person who was widowed was asked to volunteer for an interview prior to the actual date of the discussions. Those who volunteered to be interviewed did not form part of the focus groups. For each focus group discussion held in each setting and category, an interview was held on the same day. For example, after holding a focus group discussion with rural elderly women, an interview would be held with a widow, and after holding a focus group discussion with rural elderly men, an interview with a widower was held.

### *Ethical considerations*

Ethical approval for the project was obtained from the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Rhodes University Department of Psychology. To ensure informed consent, a presentation was made to potential participants at which a full explanation of the nature and purpose of the research was provided. This included an explanation of why the research was being undertaken and how confidentiality would be maintained. The voluntary nature of participation was explained, and that they may withdraw at any time should they experience discomfort. The participants were also informed that those willing to take part in the interviews and discussions would sign consent form. The consent form that was given to the participants is attached as Appendix 1.

To ensure anonymity, the transcriptions of the focus groups (FG) and the interviews (I) were numbered as follows: FG- ERW1, 2, 3..N (elderly rural women), ERM1, 2, 3...N (elderly rural men), EUW1, 2, 3...N (elderly urban women, EUM1, 2,3...N (elderly urban men), YRW1, 2, 3... (young rural women), YUW1,2,3...N (young urban women), YUM1, 2, 3...N (young urban men). For the interviews, Elderly urban widow/widower; Young urban widow/widower and KCI (key cultural informant) have been used. For confidentiality purposes, all records, including electronic and hard copies of transcripts have been securely kept.

The participants were further informed that in the event of a crisis being precipitated by the research process, for example, unresolved issues around bereavement and

mourning that might upset the participant, counselling would be provided by the researcher, who is a counselling psychologist, at a time suitable to the participant. As a precautionary measure, a prerequisite for participation was that those who were widowed would have been bereaved for a period of more than two years. Ethically, this is important as it is believed that after that period the person has completed the process of mourning and grieving (Kubler-Ross, 1969). As a trained counselling psychologist I carefully observed the participants during the interview for any feelings of distress that could be precipitated by the material under discussion. In that case, I would have either steered the conversation away from that particular topic, or suggested that the participant may wish to terminate the discussion. Fortunately, none of the participants showed distress or reported it.

#### *Data collection*

Data for analysis were generated through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with widows and widowers, an interview with a key cultural informant and focus group discussions. Thus, a type of data triangulation was employed. The length of both the focus group discussions and interviews was on average one hour. Both focus group discussions and interviews were held in isiXhosa as the researcher and all the participants were isiXhosa speakers. The focus groups and interviews were held over a period of six months.

Focus group discussions naturally allow for open and unstructured dialogue and offer diversity of perspectives, which in turn allows for the emergence of a variety of discourses. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) assert that focus group discussions are excellent for use in exploratory studies, allow for interaction and for the emergence of divergent views. In total, seven focus group discussions were conducted, with 4-7 members each. Initially the target was 6-8 participants per group. This number is regarded as the ideal size for focus group discussions although some studies have employed bigger sizes successfully (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Seale, 2004). The recommended size of 6-8 allows for enough opportunity to share, is more comfortable for participants but big enough to allow for diverse perspectives to be captured (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson,

2001; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Seale, 2004). In the event, the slightly smaller size of the groups did not hamper the richness of the discussion.

The focus groups explored social and cultural meanings, knowledge and discourses attached to spousal mourning. In order to help elicit discussions and bring focus to the topic, the vignette outlined below was introduced at the beginning of the focus group discussions. The vignette was varied with respect to gender in order to facilitate discussion around gender issues in spousal mourning. Used at the beginning, a vignette can also be a good way of building rapport by making the participants feel relaxed (Seale, 2004). Vignettes have been used to elicit cultural norms derived from participants' response and beliefs about a specific situation (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Seale, 2004). Finch (1987) has identified three major functions served by the use of vignettes in qualitative research, namely, to allow the contextual exploration of actions, to shed light on people's judgements and to offer a less threatening way of exploring sensitive topics.

Vignette:

(Scenario 1) Researcher: Let us make an example and say a 25 year old man has lost his wife through death. How should he proceed with mourning and why? Please free to just talk.

When this discussion was over, the vignette was then changed to:

(Scenario 2) Researcher: Now suppose a 25 year old woman has lost her husband through death. How should she proceed with mourning and why?

The scenarios were deliberately left open ended so that the participants could bring in whatever they deemed meaningful in their discussions. Each group was given the scenario first, and then asked to talk about the process of mourning that would follow and the significance of each activity. After discussing the second scenario, they were asked to account for the differences in how spousal mourning was constructed for women compared to how it was constructed for men. They were also asked to explore any discrepancy they had observed between normative mourning and how people actually mourn. In addition, they were asked if there would be any differences in how mourning was performed if the bereaved spouse was older. Another question

posed to them concerned their understanding of how spousal mourning had been practiced in the past.

The issues raised in the focus groups were also explored in more detail in the interviews and compared to the interviewee's experience. Regarding the interviewees, the aim was to explore their experience of the practice as well as to open up space for their voices to be heard regarding the practice since the widow is usually silenced regarding the practice. One of the normative behaviours during mourning is silence. In addition to speaking softly, this means that one may not complain of any dissatisfaction as that would be considered disrespectful. This sort of behaviour is a normative part of being a married woman/ *mendi* and is emphasized in the admonition / *yala* session when a woman is received as a wife in her married home (Bongela, 2001). This aspect was covered in the context section.

As indicated earlier on, the interviews and the focus group discussions were audio-taped with the participants' prior consent and later transcribed verbatim. The translation process was conducted by the researcher directly from the taped focus group discussions and interviews. The translation proved to be a difficult process due to the lack of equivalence between some of the isiXhosa and English words, an isiXhosa word being able to be translated in several ways. In the analysis section, the various meanings of the words are reflected. A second person was employed to do validity accuracy checks for any discrepancy in the translation and these were found to centre on the various meanings of a single isiXhosa word when translated into English. For example, ERW focus group participants referred to "*ukuba besilawula*" "If we were in power/in control/ruled"; '*lawula*' could mean any of the three words in English, so I wrote all three. I did not employ the usual transcription conventions because of the simultaneous translation and transcription. These then formed the text to be analysed.

### *Analytic procedures*

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the analytic procedure followed in this research involved the use of both thematic and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible, generic research tool that is compatible with different methods in

qualitative research, including a constructionist framework (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was carried out on the transcribed data using the step-by-step guide provided by Braun and Clarke (2003) which is provided below. In this process, the researcher is actively involved and therefore not regarded as neutral. This stance is compatible with a discourse analytic methodology. In conducting thematic analysis, theoretical insights from Chapter 2 were employed. Thematic analysis culminated in the production of themes which are discussed in Chapter 6, the initial analysis chapter. Chapter 6 deals with the first and second research questions respectively, and describes the constructions of spousal mourning. Discourse analysis was then employed in order to identify the discourses that informed the constructions. Thematic analysis thus provided the foundation from which the discourse analysis was conducted.

The second procedure entailed the identification and analysis of discourses informing the constructions of spousal mourning and these are presented in Chapter 7, the second analysis chapter. In the paragraphs that follow, an outline of both analytic procedures is provided, starting with thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines to conducting thematic analysis consists of six phases and these are elaborated in the following paragraphs.

*Phase 1. Familiarizing yourself with your data*

During this phase, the researcher immerses himself/herself in the data by repeatedly reading the data in an active way, searching for meanings, patterns/themes and so on. I had collected the data myself and thus had some prior familiarity with the data, which aided in this process. In addition, I had conducted the transcription process by myself and this further assisted in familiarizing me with the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that it is also advisable to start taking notes and marking ideas that might be revisited at a later stage.

*Phase 2. Generating initial codes for the data*

Having gone through phase one processes, this phase involves producing preliminary codes from the data. "Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88) and are considered to be an important aspect of the analysis as they necessitate that data be organised in a meaningful way.

Coding can be performed manually or through a software programme. In this research, coding was done manually, by using highlighters and writing notes on interesting texts, in as far as they were able to answer the specific research questions. At the end of this phase, a list of different codes identified across the data set is drawn. Braun and Clarke (2006) also caution against ignoring accounts that depart from the dominant story in the analysis and advise that these be retained during coding.

### *Phase 3. Searching for themes*

Phase three involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. This entails analysing the codes and considering how different codes may be combined into an overarching theme. This may be done visually, using tables or a mind-map. The relationship between codes, between themes and between different levels of themes, for example, key overarching theme and sub-themes is considered at this phase. Codes that do not fit into the main themes are housed in a 'miscellaneous' theme as they might be useful at a later stage when refinement of themes has been done.

### *Phase 4. Reviewing themes*

This phase involves refining the candidate themes that had been searched for and identified in phase three. This refinement process entails discarding some themes, collapsing together some themes into one theme and dividing other themes into more themes. This phase involves two levels of reviewing and refining themes. Level one involves reviewing at the level of the coded extracts, whereby collated extracts for each theme are read for coherence. If they cohere, then the second level of phase four is tackled. If there is no coherence, then the theme is reviewed to see if it is problematic or the data extracts might not fit in the theme, thus calling for a new theme to be generated and finding a home for the extracts that do not currently fit or discarding them.

Level two involves reviewing the entire data set, taking into consideration the validity of the individual themes in relation to the data set and whether the potential thematic map is an accurate reflection of the meanings evident in the data set as a whole. Re-coding is also done should the themes contain any data that have been overlooked in

the previous coding system. Once the thematic map fits the data set, the following phase is undertaken. However, should there be disparity, further reviewing and refining of the coding is required until a satisfactory thematic map of the data is obtained. By the time this stage is concluded, an identification of the different themes, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data is apparent.

#### *Phase 5. Defining and naming themes*

During this phase, the themes identified in phase four are clearly defined and refined for presentation in the analysis. This means that the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about, and the overall themes are identified. In addition, what aspect of the data each theme captures is determined and the data within these themes are analysed. It is very important to identify what is of interest about the data extracts presented and why. In addition, how the theme fits with the overall story about the data regarding the research question/s is also deemed important. Part of the refinement process involves identifying whether or not a theme contains any sub-themes. At the end of this phase, any working titles that could have been assigned to your themes need to be given suitable names that are succinct and which immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about.

#### *Phase 6. Producing the report*

This is the stage at which the final report is produced.

As indicated earlier on, both thematic analysis and discourse analysis were employed in analysing the data. This research adopted Parker’s (2005) method of discourse analysis, which is informed by Foucault’s poststructuralist work. Parker aims to locate and describe the various discourses reproduced in society. His approach sets out seven criteria and three auxiliary criteria for discourse analysis (2005, pp 145-156). As noted earlier, Parker (2005, p. 145) defines discourse as “a system of statements which construct an object”.

I began the analytical process by reading and re-reading the text (interview transcript) several times. In doing this, I was guided by the four questions that Parker (2005) deems significant and which he proposes we need to answer for any ‘analyzable’ text. I also focused my attention on extracting those sections that provided the richest

source of analytic material in as far as they addressed the research questions. The four questions propositioned by Parker are:

(i) *Why is the text interesting?* Encompassed in this question is the searching for something complex or contradictory about the text and then focusing on how the contradiction works.

(ii) *What do we know of the material out of which it is constructed?* This question includes taking into account the cultural images used to build the text, as well as one's cultural background when reading the text.

(iii) *What might be the effects of different readings of the text?* This takes into account what the text aims at and questioning its functions and consequences in its everyday taken-for-granted sense.

(iv) *How does it conform to or challenge patterns of power?* This question attends to the power relations of the text. In the following paragraphs a brief elaboration of Parker's criteria for discourse analysis is undertaken.

**1. A discourse is a coherent system of meanings.** Discourses paint a picture of 'reality' using statements and metaphors that bring with them particular images of the events described and phrases which seem loaded with meaning. The statements are grouped and given coherence, by bringing in cultural understandings of what constitutes a topic. We have to bring our own understanding of discourses from outside onto any example of discourse for it to become part of a coherent system. But these are not watertight; therefore, discourses contain contradictions within them. In this study, attention was drawn to the coherence, shifts and contradictions contained in the constructions of spousal mourning given by the participants. Mostly, these centred on whether *ukuzila* is what you wear (read visibility) or something that goes on in one's heart and is inferred from one's behaviour.

**2. Discourse is realized in texts.** Fragments of discourse are found, interpreted and analysed within texts. As Talbot (1997a, in Sunderland 2004, p.7) states, text is "the fabric on which discourse is manifested". Texts are defined by Parker (1992, p. 6) as "delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form that can be given interpretative gloss". Therefore, in addition to spoken and written texts, there are other forms of texts such as "all kinds of symbolic material that we use to represent ourselves to each other" (Parker, 2005), for example, visual images such as advertisements, films,

clothing, psychiatric case files and physical space. In this study, the transcribed material from the taped interviews and focus groups served as the text that was analysed and the discourses at work in these texts were then located and explored.

**3. Discourse reflects on its own way of speaking.** Parker draws attention to the tendency of discourses to comment on the terms that they use. These are the points where “the discourse itself is folding around and reflecting on its way of speaking” (Parker, 2005, p. 148). This criterion means that when analysing discourse, one should deal with the different levels of meaning, both explicit and hidden meanings. For example, one of the constructions of *ukuzila* for men was that ‘men do not mourn’ (explicit meaning), but upon further elaboration, this was explained as ‘men do not mourn by clothing’, that is wearing special ‘clothes of mourning’, but by engaging in culturally normative mourning behaviours. These behaviours are identified in the analysis section.

**4. Discourse refers to other discourses.** Parker (2005, p. 150) asserts that “Discourses embed, entail and presuppose other discourses to the extent that the contradictions within a discourse open up questions about what other discourses are at work”. We therefore need to understand the interconnection between different discourses in an analysis as well as the contradictions between different ways of describing something. In this study, the various meanings attached to the mourning process allowed for such a space. For example, some people constructed it as a matter of the heart, whilst others constructed it as something to be displayed, and this aspect emerged as the major focus of the constructions. All three discourses upheld ‘visibility’ of mourning. In addition, the contradictions might be an indication of the instability of the particular discourse, and therefore operate as pointers to struggle and possibility for social change (Sunderland, 2004).

**5. Discourse is about objects.** Parker (2005) asserts that analysis necessitates some degree of objectification and that there are at least two levels of objectification in discourse. Firstly, discourse brings phenomena into being, constructing objects, giving them reality by simply using nouns. In other words, discourse has the capacity to produce what it names (Baxter, 2003). This corresponds to Foucault’s reference to discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”

(Foucault, 1972, p. 49). “Discourses permit us to centre our attention on things that are not ‘really’ there, and once an object has been delineated by discourse it is difficult not to refer to it as if it were real” (Parker, 2005, p. 152). The second level is that a discourse refers to itself or other discourses as if they were objects. In this study, an example of a discursive object would be the widow in mourning, who is constructed as ceremonially unclean in contrast to the widower (Pauw, 1990) and therefore should be excluded from public life and marked out by black mourning clothes. Parker (2005) states that when doing discourse analysis, one needs to find out which objects the text under analysis refers to.

**6. Discourse contains subjects.** Discourse addresses us in a particular way. Discourse analysis deals with the number of ways in which discourses invite us to perceive ourselves and others as a specific kind of subject. This refers to positioning, with reflexive positioning being self-positioning and interactive positioning being positioning by another (Davies and Harré, 1990). The mourning widow can be simultaneously an object and subject. She is allowed certain subject positions, for example, as a respectful woman who mourns the death of her husband. In this research, the subject position of *mendi* was a self-positioning by the women, as well as an interactive one assigned to them by men in explaining the differential treatment in spousal mourning. One may or may not be able to speak from these subject positions. Parker (1992, p.10) has suggested the following questions as useful to a focus on subjectification: “Who is being addressed by the text? What are they expected to do when addressed (e.g. adopt particular perceptions and positions, and perform appropriate work, and what rights/powers does this discourse bestow on the subject to speak?” Several subject positions were assigned to both men and women in this research. Men, for example, were assigned the subject position of ‘head’ by women when pondering about their lack of mourning.

**7. Discourse is historically located.** Parker (2002, p. 153) has pointed out that “Discourses are located in time and are about history, for the objects they refer to are constituted in the past by the discourses or related discourses”. Thus, for discourse analysts, it is important to show other instances of a discourse, tracing their source and evolution and what they meant as they emerged and how the discourses have shifted historically. This then enables one to understand what the present allusions

actually refer to. An examination of the constructedness of the history of the mourning process, in this thesis, shed light on the ways in which *ukuzila* is currently practiced. This aspect is covered in the analysis section when discussing the participants' current constructions of historical practices related to mourning, with the view to investigating how these might be used to justify current constructions and power relations attached to them and to identifying any disjuncture.

Although Parker (2005) says that the aforementioned criteria are necessary and sufficient for distinguishing particular discourses, he asserts that the three auxiliary criteria should also be focused on in research. The three auxiliary criteria pertain to institutions, power and ideology. The first one is that discourses support institutions. This means that discursive practices represent institutions and are implicated in some way with the structures of such institutions. In this study the MSD, Familial-*ukwenda* and Respect-*hlonipha* discourses were closely aligned to the family as the institution imposing the mourning process on the mourning spouse (read widow). Institutions are structured around and produce power relations, thus the second assertion is that discourses reproduce power relations. According to Parker, it is important to ask who would gain by invoking certain discourses. In relation to this thesis, the men would gain by invoking all three discourses identified above as the discourses favour them. For example, they, men, do not have to wear 'clothes of mourning' and their mourning period is usually shorter than that of the cultural norm for mourning. This was explained using a male sex drive discourse. Parker's final auxiliary criterion is that discourses have ideological effects in that they connect with other discourses to sanction oppression and allow the dominant to take over.

In addition, the usefulness of the text in shedding light on spousal mourning was considered. The analysis was infused with theoretical insights which drew on feminist notions of femininity, postcolonial feminism, hybridity, discourse on sexuality identified by Hollway (1984), Foucault's (1991) work on surveillance and van Langenhove and Harre's (1999) positioning theory. The employment of these insights enabled the highlighting and scrutinizing of gendered relations and gendered power effects.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explained the methodology employed in this thesis, namely, thematic analysis and discourse analysis. This involved a discussion of the understandings of the notion of discourse. Included were discussions of text, context and reflexivity which form part and parcel of discourse analytic work. The position that was taken with respect to text and context was that of Parker (1990), who proposes that text is already saturated with context and there is nothing outside the text. There was therefore no distinction of text from context. The texts which formed the basis for analysis were the transcriptions of focus group discussions and of interviews with widows, widowers and cultural informants. An aspect which is deemed important in doing discourse analytic work is reflexivity, which acknowledges the researcher's personal investment in carrying out the research, and how the position of the researcher could have affected the research process. This aspect was taken into consideration in this chapter.

The research questions that the study sought to answer were outlined, followed by the research method covering decisions about participants' characteristics, procedures for how the research was to be executed, incorporating data collection and analysis. Participants' characteristics refers to their gender, general age, and whether in a rural or urban setting. In addition to these characteristics, for the interviews, a qualifying criterion was that the interviewee had to be widowed. Data collection was comprised of focus group discussions and interviews with the participants along the lines of axes mentioned above. Analytic procedures included thematic analysis, which was employed to analyse the texts with respect to the constructions of spousal mourning; and discourse analysis which was utilised to identify the discourses informing the constructions.

The following chapters present the analysis of these texts. Chapter 6 has two main sections: the first part covers the various themes on current constructions of spousal mourning for men and women whilst the second part consists of themes on current constructions of historical practices that inform current understandings of spousal mourning.

**CHAPTER 6:  
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION -  
CONSTRUCTIONS OF SPOUSAL MOURNING**

INTRODUCTION

This research set out to examine the practice of *ukuzila* (mourning) amongst the AmaXhosa in the Eastern Cape, with spousal mourning as the focal point. The primary aim of the research was to examine the constructions of the practice, focusing specifically on the gendered nature thereof. The analysis is comprised of two chapters. The current chapter covers the discussion of how the participants constructed spousal mourning for men and for women and the explanations offered for such constructions. It contains complex and contradictory intricacies of claims as to what spousal mourning is and what it is not. Central to the constructions of spousal mourning was the issue of visibility, the imperative to show one's mourner status through wearing 'clothes of mourning'. The chapter also includes the expressions and acts of resistance to the cultural and gendered issues related to mourning that came up in the constructions. This is then followed by a section which provides an analysis and discussion of the participants' current constructions of historical practices related to mourning, with the view to investigating how these might be used to justify current constructions and power relations attached to them and to identifying any disjuncture. The second and last analysis chapter covers the identification and analysis of the discourses mediating these constructions, as well as the analysis of positioning/s within such discourses.

The discussion of the vignette revealed that the participants' constructions of spousal mourning were as something that someone has to show, as way of conferring respect to the deceased. This resonates with the definition of *ukuzila* by Ngubane (2000, p. 49) who defines it as "show[ing] respect by avoidance". Researchers have indicated that among the AmaXhosa, various avoidances and restrictions during mourning apply to dress, diet, movement as well as social and sexual relations (Hirst, 2005; Pahl, Pienaar & Ndungane, 1989). However, whilst some participants were of the view that one could show mourning by engaging in culturally appropriate mourning

behaviour such as restricting one's movement and by sexual abstinence, others proposed mourning 'by heart'. Those who upheld the mourning 'by heart' viewpoint drew on the psychological notion of internalized grieving. Some of them were of the opinion that this could be inferred from one's behaviour, whereas others maintained that changes in behaviour were not mandatory. A different group insisted that showing one's mourning had to be visible by publicly displaying mourning through a marker. This visibility of spousal mourning was seen as achieved specifically through wearing special 'clothes of mourning'. However, different inscriptions were assigned on the male and female body, were 'optional' for widowers and obligatory for widows. In sum, showing that one is mourning for one's spouse turned out to be highly gender divided, with women's mourning being more formalized and restrictive compared to that of men.

In the following sections, the various constructions of spousal mourning are examined. These are comprised of 'spousal mourning by clothes', which focused on the outward marker of mourning and which characterized women's mourning; 'spousal mourning by behaviour', which put emphasis on normative mourning behaviour which is different to everyday conduct; 'spousal mourning by clothes and behaviour' which insists on both the outward marker and normative mourning behaviour; mourning 'by heart', which is invisible, and is similar to the psychological notion of mourning as it is viewed as internalized grieving and finally, 'no mourning', which characterized men's mourning.

## CONSTRUCTIONS OF CURRENT SPOUSAL MOURNING

Constructions of current spousal mourning turned out to be fraught with contradictions. In the following sections, the task of looking at the different understandings of what spousal mourning entails in relation to both men and women is undertaken.

### *'Spousal mourning by clothes'*

Some participants maintained that a spouse who is in mourning should be seen as such by publicly displaying mourning through wearing special 'clothes of mourning'.

The clothes thus serve as a sign or outward marker of mourning. In the following sections the constructions of ‘spousal mourning by clothes’ for both men and women are examined.

*‘Men do not mourn by clothing’: unmarked male mourning*

The construction of ‘mourning by clothes’ for men was spoken of as a historical rather than a current practice. The discussion of the construction of historical practices is taken up later in this chapter. However, certain items of clothing such as a hat or armband or a small black button were sometimes used by men as a sign of mourning. In discussions of men’s current mourning practices, both men and women participants agreed that ‘*men do not mourn by clothes*’:

Extract 1 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW 5:** The man does not change into mourning clothes.

Extract 2 (Key Cultural Informant: KCI) I

**KCI:** Men do not mourn by clothing. He shows that inside he is mourning. But sometimes it is not easy to see it. He is still giving a lift to the lady whom we suspect caused the wife’s heart attack.

Although men’s current mourning was characterized as excluding visibility, they were still expected to show mourning ‘*inside*’ and this had to be inferred from their actions as implied in extract 2. However, the expectations of behavioural indicators were not always matched with reality. This is discussed further on in the analysis. Some descriptions of current practices referred to a black armband, which indicates the death of a spouse, as well as a black button. However, the black button does not specifically identify the man as widowed but as someone who has lost a loved one, for example, a sibling, or child or parent.

Extract 3 (Elderly Rural Male: ERM) FG

**ERM2:** Eh, the women wear black as they should when their spouse has died. The man wears a black button or black armband.

Extract 4 (Younger Urban Male: YUM) FG

**YUM 4:** Concerning the button on both the mourner and other people, if I meet this person, when I see the button, I speak to the person differently, respecting the pain they are going through.

Although some participants indicated the use of a black button or armband, others disputed this:

Extract 5 (Younger Urban Male: YUM) FG

**UYM3:** They have said it all. I think that is how the man mourns. He does not wear mourning clothes like the woman who is visible.

In this extract, the participant was responding to the vignette on how the widower will go about his mourning. The other participants had already responded, highlighting the specific mourning behaviours expected of the widower. This participant is stressing the non-visibility of the widower's mourning compared to that of the woman.

*'You wear it': clothes and female mourning*

In contrast to the portrayal of men's mourning as *'men do not mourn by clothes'* outlined above, a construction of women's current mourning common to both men and women was that *'women mourn by clothes'*. In other words, for a woman to be regarded as mourning properly she must be visible through the *'clothes of mourning'*, an observance referred to as *'wearing'*. This marking of the widow with special *'clothes of mourning'* is also applicable to *'other cultures'* in South Africa, Africa and other countries, as indicated in the introductory chapter and in the mourning chapter. The following extracts illustrate that for a woman to be mourning appropriately (read respecting her deceased husband), it is obligatory for her to wear special mourning clothes or at least some kind of uniform as a marker.

Extract 6 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**R:** Now let's say it's the wife who has lost a husband at 25 years. Okay? What is the procedure? What is going to happen?

**ERW1:** This young wife is going to mourn. They are going to make clothes of mourning for her.

**R:** If we say she is going to mourn, how do we know she is really mourning?

**ERW1:** Through the mourning clothes. Others wear German prints, but because it's a uniform you can see she's in mourning.

Extract 7 (Younger Urban Male: YUM) FG

**YUM 4:** I want to talk about isiXhosa and black: black clothes for women and black button for men. You wear it. Others, as my brother (P3) said 'mourning by heart', especially in townships, but people will accuse you of having had a hand in your husband's death, and so you force yourself to mourn by clothes to avoid that. Others need to return to work and cannot wear the black clothes to work. Others begin to put on a headscarf even if before they did not, others prefer a certain colour.

Extract 8 (Younger Urban Women: YUW) FG

**YUW1:** It is right to mourn by clothing because you loved your husband. It shows that you loved him when you mourn for him for the period required.

Extract 9 (Younger Rural Women)YRW: FG

**YRW 3:** Mourning clothes will help as people will know that ['uphume nenzila'] you have broken the 'ukuzila' custom if you start engaging in inappropriate behaviour. ('uphume nezila' is an expression used when one has not handled mourning well due to engaging in inappropriate behaviour)

The 'clothes of mourning' make it possible for the mourning woman to be marked out as different as reflected in, '*you can see she's in mourning*'. Visibility thus renders women's mourning valid/credible. In addition, visibility allows for self-surveillance by ordering one's behaviour in accordance with the cultural norms of mourning in order to avoid the 'normalising judgement' of those who might '*accuse you of having had a hand in your husband's death*'. The notion of self-surveillance is covered in the section on '*visibility and surveillance*' in the theoretical framework chapter.

Showing mourning could be achieved by wearing '*black clothes*' or a '*certain colour*' or by '*put[ing] on a headscarf*' thus indicating variations in visibility. According to

the participant in extract 7, these variations are subject to ‘cultural’ spaces and economic considerations. For example, when the woman is in a *township* [3], there may be fewer restrictions. This has to do with the assumption that in these spaces people are less subject to cultural prescriptions, and may take on ‘Westernised’ ways of doing things. When the woman has to undertake the role of breadwinner, she may be exonerated from wearing the black clothes required by *isiXhosa* (culture of the AmaXhosa). This is because in the public sphere of work, the identity of marked widows becomes less feasible, especially as for many this work is associated with racialised power relations (see later extracts: referring to ‘*kwamlungu*’ – the White person’s place). For many of these women, work will entail a form of domestic or low paid labour (Census 2011). Headscarves thus become a compromise position that allows a marker, but does not violate the supposedly ‘non-cultured’ space of work. This may be contrasted to the ‘cultural space’ in the rural areas where the ancestors are believed to dwell as discussed in the context section.

Variability in terms of colour and the use of ‘German prints’ points to the dynamic nature of ‘cultural practices’ (see later discussion). The arrival of German settlers in the Eastern Cape in 1858 and their subsequent establishment of trading and mission stations resulted in the blending of indigenous and colonial forms of mourning. The German settlers brought with them a fabric called “German prints” which the Xhosa women gradually included in their traditional clothing.

By mourning clothes widows are made to look different and thus subjected to a “field of visibility” (Foucault, 1982, p. 221-222) which makes them to be conscious of being watched. As a result they exercise self-control as they are aware that if they transgress the rules of mourning they will be disciplined. By ‘*clothes will help*’, it is meant that they will help you as the mourner to guard against inappropriate mourning behaviour thereby suggesting self-monitoring. In the words of (Foucault, 1980, p. 155), they become their “own overseer” “interiorizing” the “inspecting gaze” “exercising surveillance over, and against” themselves. This is a manifestation of disciplinary power which is dealt with in the theoretical framework.

Several justifications for visibility are provided in the extracts above: there is a moral injunction that it is the right thing to do (extract 8); an appeal is made to the good

woman who *'loved her husband'*; and by mourning visibly, the woman avoids stigma of being accused of *'having a hand in the husband's death'*. Although a culturally normative way of mourning is showing respect to the deceased, it is worth noting that in extract 8 mourning it is correlated with love.

Mourning is thus used as a signifier of love – which has resonances with the have-hold discourse (Hollway, 1984/89). In the have-hold discourse, women are portrayed as requiring a committed relationship in which they can safely explore sexuality. Furthermore, in this discourse the women are positioned as active subjects, who must take responsibility to maintain the love relationship. In this extract, this maintenance of relationship is linked to mourning visibly, whereby mourning visibly is appealed to as showing love for the deceased husband, thus putting pressure on the woman to continue with the bond of love. The woman continues to hold even after death. Although there were traces of the have-hold discourse, there was not enough data to sustain it as a separate discourse that could then be analysed in the following chapter.

Visibility allows other processes such as observation and monitoring of the widow's behaviour by both self and others to see if the person is behaving appropriately as exemplified in the following extracts:

Extract 10 (Young Rural Woman: YRW) FG

**YRW 3:** Mourning clothes will help as people will know that *'uphume nezila'* if you start engaging in inappropriate behaviour.

**YRW 1:** people will say *'urhumrhekile'*.

R: please explain what you mean by *'urhumrhekile'*.

**YRW 1:** *'urhumrhekile'* is an escalation of bad luck due to the bad thing/s you are doing in private, but people will see openly. For example, if you were drinking secretly or having a boyfriend in secret, you will do it openly and in an exaggerated manner and people will know you did not mourn and they then suggest that you must take off the mourning clothes as that is a disgrace.

According to Ngubane (1977, p. 82), when a person is *'rhumrhekile'*, s/he will become “a sexual pervert, speak or sing when s/he should not, and be aggressive without any provocation”. The statements of *'uphume nezila'* and *'urhumrhekile'*

show disapproval concerning how spousal mourning has been handled and bring disgrace to the mourner. From the above extracts, the power of visibility to evoke self-monitoring is underlined by '*clothes will help*'; whereby it is meant that they will help you as the mourner to guard against inappropriate mourning behaviour. This self-policing is facilitated by the fear of constant surveillance. The visibility of the widow thus serves as a form of self as well as social regulation as the private becomes public through '*urhumrhekile*'. Failure to engage in appropriate mourning behaviour, even in secret, results in bad luck. Women thus comply with mourning by clothes for fear of such reprisal, including accusations of '*having had a hand in your husband's death*' as stated in extract 6. The cultural code for mourners is thus encoded on the body but differently for men and women.

This section on current constructions of spousal mourning by clothes has highlighted the differential treatment of widows and widowers, with visibility emerging as one constant theme for women. The operation of gender power relations whereby men were free to do as they please and women were coerced into showing their mourning was implicated in this differential treatment. Although there were shifts in terms of forms of visibility, for example, variation in showing mourning by wearing German prints, black, a certain colour, or a headscarf, the woman remained marked thus showing the continuity of her visibility in spite of the various changes that have taken place. The persistence of visibility for women notwithstanding the various socio-cultural and socio-political changes that have taken place has been identified as of interest in this study. In the following section, further exploration of visibility is undertaken. This will include examining accounts of those in favour of and those against visibility.

### ***Visibility and surveillance/regulation***

As highlighted in the section above, visibility turned out to be a major component of the widow's mourning. Whilst some were in favour of visibility, thus bolstering the claim for women to be marked, others were against it. This section speaks to the regulation of widows through visibility.

It was clear from the data that visibility is used to regulate women. This included: (i) regulation of her sexuality through and understanding that she needs ‘protection’ from predatory others such as men approaching her for a relationship and criminals who assume she has inherited a lot of money from her husband; (ii) regulation of her movement through protection of the community from contamination with bad luck, and (ii) regulation of behaviour through humiliation. These various forms of regulation are explained below.

*Regulation of sexuality through protection from predators*

Since nowadays it is the widow who is rendered visible, some explanation for this gendered visibility is required. A justification provided is ‘protection’. The ‘protection’ of the widow is twofold. Firstly, it is to protect her from sexual predators, and criminals who are after her inheritance. Secondly, by mourning visibly, the widow seemingly protects herself from men approaching her for a relationship.

Extract 11 (Younger Rural Women: YRW) FG

**YRW 3:** I would say the value is: since you were a married woman, it shows you are not to be taken cheap and prohibits men from approaching you for a relationship, because they see you are a widow.

Extract 12 (Younger Urban Women: YUW) FG

R: What is the value of putting on the clothes?

**YUW3:** I think the purpose is to show respect to the deceased because we as Africans believe something must show respect as he is going to come back as ancestor. Even though we say women are targets but they may be forced to have relationships outside. The other purpose is to label: don’t come to me. It highlights that men should keep away.

These two statements assume a certain kind of heterosexuality in which men are assertive and possibly predatory, while women are the ‘*target*’ of sexual advances. The statements thus perpetuate the double standards in the construction of masculine and feminine sexuality, by which men are regarded as “positively sexual” (Shefer &

Foster, 2001, p. 375) and women as reactive to male active sexuality. The clothes form a hedge of ‘protection’ against these advances, which assumes a certain need on the part of women, given their possible vulnerability in the face of these advances.

What this ‘protection narrative’ does is rob her of sexual agency, and de-sexualize her, thus regulating her in a particular way. The ‘protection narrative’ was also brought up in discussions of mourning by other researchers (Guzana, 2004; Manyedi Et al., 2004) (see Chapter 3: Mourning).

From both extracts, the regulation of the widow’s sexuality through visibility is evident in ‘*prohibits men from approaching you for a relationship*’ and ‘*highlights that men should keep away.*’

By customarily marking the widow with ‘clothes of mourning’ one could surmise that the purpose is to make the widow less attractive, thus desexualizing her through the dress code. The marking of the married woman by wearing long skirts or dresses in order to prevent other men from ‘looking’ was highlighted in the context section. Various authors have called attention to the desexualisation of widows. For example, Lamb (2000) and Shweder (1999) have documented the practice by Hindu people of making the widow wear a white *sari* which is thought of as making her less attractive, thus deterring men from looking at her. Sossou (2001) has alluded to the desexualizing of widows through dress code in Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast.

However, there are consequences for both ‘wearing’ and ‘not wearing’ in relation to spousal mourning. The unintended effect of visibility is that the woman falls ‘victim’ to criminal elements and other men: the woman becomes a target of the very predatory others like criminals and men interested in having a relationship with her because of the inheritance. ‘Wearing’ thus becomes counterproductive in its endeavour to ‘protect’ the woman. The following extracts speak to these unintended effects of visibility:

Extract 13 (Young Urban Woman: YUW) FG

**R:** What is the value of putting on the clothes?

**YUW 1:** they say it shows you respect your husband

**YUW 2:** It deters men from approaching you for a relationship.

**YUW 3:** But they (women with mourning clothes) become a target. Some widows have money. The man comes close to you and as a wife you become a victim.

Extract 14 (Young Urban Woman: YUW) FG

**YUW 5:** To add on to that, there are effects of mourning at home and outside because when people see you as a woman in mourning clothes, you become a target to criminals. They know you have inherited something and take chances and they rob you.

What emerges from the extracts is the victimization of women made possible through the marker / visibility as it creates the opportunity for attracting criminals and predatory men. However, the need for protection from predatory males is still emphasized. Visibility thus presents a ‘gendered double bind’ for the woman: a damned if you ‘wear’ and damned if you don’t wear scenario in the sense that there are consequences for both ‘wearing’ and ‘not wearing’. This double bind can be exemplified by the use of mourning clothes as a deterrent which wards off criminals and men, whilst simultaneously having the unintended consequence of serving as a source of attraction to them.

Traditionally, visibility was there to ward off would-be suitors due to respect for tradition and the belief in bad luck (please refer to context section on *AmaXhosa belief system*). In addition, as per their traditional role of provider, there was no material attraction for a man who approached a widow. Instead, a man approaching a widow would be inviting responsibility for the widow and her children; he would not approach her because of what she could offer (Mbiti, 1969). However, the changing significance of visibility, from warding off to attraction, is now linked to decrease in respect of tradition and fear of bad luck. Now greed has set in due to the possibility of inheritance as a result of the modern economy, such as the availability of insurance. As a result, men stand to benefit. The media abounds with stories of children who have been left penniless when their remarried mothers died, leaving the inheritance to the stepfather.

*Regulation of movement through 'protection' of the community from bad luck/pollution*

The following extract speaks to how visibility enables the regulation of a woman's movement through the protection of the community from bad luck or pollution.

Extract 15 (Key cultural informant: KCI) I

**KCI:** Then there are certain places /spaces you do not go to, for example you keep away from the kraal because there is a belief known as 'umkhondo' (literal meaning of 'umkhondo' is 'tracks' of the person).

R: Yes, please tell me about 'umkhondo'.

**KCI:** 'Umkhondo' for death has to do with livestock, also there is 'umkhondo' when you are having your periods you keep away from livestock. So you keep away from the kraal.

R: mh

**KCI:** Even when you want to board a taxi nowadays, they might not allow you to get inside because of 'umkhondo'.

The protection of the community from contamination with bad luck emanates from the cultural belief of *umkhondo* (tracks of the person). Among the AmaXhosa, as well as in other African cultures, the woman is regarded as highly polluting to men during the times she is closest to nature, such as during menstruation and immediately after child-birth, hence the isolation of women during such times (Hirst, 2006; Pauw, 1991). It is believed that bereaved women in particular carry potential harm to the life of people, animals and crops as reflected in the extract, hence social contact with the affected person/mourner is restricted. This has been asserted in the works of Bongela (2001); Guzana, (2004); Manyedi et al., (2003); Pauw (1975); Ramphela (1996); Rosenblatt & Nkosi (2007). For this reason, visibility serves to alert others to the widow status of the woman, hence they '*might not allow you to get inside*' a taxi and other spaces mentioned in the extract. Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007) have documented how Zulu widows are reserved a special place at the back of the bus or taxi because people should not be exposed to the widow's back which is believed to be emitting bad luck.

## *Humiliation*

Regulation of women's behaviour was also achieved through the notion of humiliation. This took two forms, in which (i) the woman is humiliated through the 'clothes of mourning' to behave well, and (ii) she is threatened with the humiliation of the removal of the 'clothes of mourning' should she behave badly.

Extract 16 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ER 3:** The mourning clothes are designed such that you can be humiliated. Be humiliated (disgraced/shamed) that you are different if you are a woman, so that you are visible and different. So that people will know what kind of person you are. If you do wrong people will know that you are in mourning. Just like an initiate - 'ikrwala' (agreement from the rest). How you behave.

An 'ikrwala' is an Xhosa initiate who has just come out of the initiation/circumcision school. To show his new status he is marked by a certain type of clothing and is also expected to adhere to specified behaviours. Extract 16 makes it very clear that the purpose served by visibility is to monitor the behaviour of the widow. The clothes, which in this extract are seen as a form of humiliation in and of themselves, indicate the mourner's status and thus an expectation of certain kinds of mourning behaviour.

Visibility or special mourning clothes thus play a regulatory function with respect to women's behaviour, as can be inferred from '*be humiliated/disgraced/shamed if you misbehave*'. As long as she has the mourning clothes on, she is aware of the constant gaze from others; she "assumes responsibility for the constraints of power" and constantly practices self-surveillance. In the words of Foucault (1977, pp. 202- 203), the subjects (mourning women) "inscribe in themselves a power relation in which they are the principle of their own subjection". The 'gaze' is thus internalized and the subject uses "technologies of self" to normalize their behaviour, in this case, to engage in mourning behaviour that is deemed appropriate. Rose (1996b, p. 135) describes technologies of the self as "elaboration of certain techniques for the conduct of one's relation with oneself, for example, requiring one to relate to oneself epistemologically (know yourself), despotically (master yourself) or in other ways (care for yourself)". Technologies of the self thus require 'the self' to operate in a

regulatory manner in multiple aspects of our lives, and mould our conduct in the desired direction, and not *misbehave* (Rose, 1996b).

When the widow's behaviour does not befit the clothes, a punitive socio-familial measure of *khulula* is employed, which means that the wearing of the clothes is brought to an end prematurely. *Khulula* literally means 'undress/take your clothes off', and in this case refers to the removal of the mourning clothes before the official termination of mourning. For example, a widow who engages in sex is released (*khulula* process) from mourning before the agreed upon termination date and this is regarded as shameful. This is thus another regulatory strategy used to avoid fouling or tainting the custom and the family. The woman is thus coerced to comply with acceptable mourning behaviour through being threatened with premature *khulula* (terminate the mourning period). The following extract reflects this 'understanding':

Extract 17 (Elderly Urban Widow: EUW) I

**R:** Are there women who behave like the men?

**EUW:** Yes, lots. Some wear the mourning clothes but act differently. For example, my sister in law long before the end of the mourning period was sleeping out. The neighbours asked to 'khulula'/release her (terminate the mourning period).

**R:** So the women also do the thing of sleeping out?

**EUW:** Yes they do. The family did not do it-the neighbours did. She would go looking for her boyfriend. Such behaviour does not give respect to the clothes.

In this extract, the woman had engaged in 'visible mourning' by 'wearing'. However, her behaviour did not befit her mourner status and this resulted in *khulula*. This highlights the constraints of visibility on women's sexual desire as well as the consequences of resistance. This can be contrasted to the men who actively seek out women '*the same day the wife dies*' without dire consequences. This aspect is taken up in the chapter that discusses discourses under 'male sexual drive' discourse.

In addition to monitoring one's behaviour, there is specific regulation of woman's sexuality. In extract 17, gender differentiation in sexuality is highlighted. When the woman wants to satisfy her desire, this is regarded as inappropriate and branded as '*not giving respect to the clothes*'. The obvious implication is that women who

emulate men by ‘outing’ are promiscuous, a bad thing for women, hence she released from mourning (*‘khulula’* process) before time for non-compliance. This indicates the control of women’s sexuality through the clothes. Women’s sexual agency is therefore subdued and patriarchal power relations prevail in spite of resistance from the women. The issue of regulation of woman’s sexuality is taken up in the next analysis chapter when discussing the MSD.

In addition, mourning visibly indicates that the widow is showing respect to the deceased husband who is also a future ancestor as reflected in extract 12. As pointed out in the context section, an ancestor in AmaXhosa belief system is different from the western notion of ancestors as one’s forebears. Ancestors are sometimes called ‘the living dead’ because it is believed that they are not dead but continue to live in a different state and in another world (Bongela, 2001; Mkhize, 2004; Ngubane, 2004; Soga, 1933/89). They continue their family membership, and expect their living to conduct themselves well and adhere to their traditional norms. Disobedience results in the ancestors turning their backs on those who behave inappropriately and they begin to *‘encounter bad luck’*. Ancestors among the AmaXhosa are always male (Bongela, 2001; Jordan, 1960/2004; Soga, 1937/1989). The fact that ancestors can only be men, and that ancestors are an important part of many people’s lives means that there is significant potential for gendered power relations to be played out around the ancestors. Some women do not only have to respect living men, but also dead male ancestors. Their behaviour is thus regulated through an appeal to gendered ancestral beliefs.

In summary, visibility is linked to: restriction on movement (certain places/spaces) owing to *umkhondo*; restriction with respect to sexuality; promotion of ‘proper’ gendered behaviour in terms of showing respect to the ancestors and to avoid humiliation. The ‘clothes of mourning’ make the widow’s mourning valid as people can *see* that she is in mourning; she avoids stigma and *‘rhumrhekile’*; she has the promise of protection from criminals and sexual advances; her visibility alerts others to her mourner status, thus avoiding contamination with her bad luck, she demonstrates a suitable level of desexualisation and thus avoids the threat of *khulula*. This long list, compared to the one for men who wear a button if they wish to, renders in stark profile the gendered nature of visibility.

This section highlighted the surveillance and regulation of the widow's behaviour made possible by marking her with special 'clothes of mourning' thus making her visible as a mourner. It also brought to the fore the lack thereof when it comes to men. This non-visibility of men during *ukuzila* meant that their mourning behaviour could not be regulated. In sum, the issue of visibility was linked to gender and power relations.

Although there were shifts in terms of forms of visibility, for example, variation in showing mourning by wearing German prints, black, a certain colour, or a headscarf, the woman's visibility continued as she remained marked. The following section addresses how resistance was expressed by the women.

#### *Visibility and gendered resistance*

The preceding section highlighted the regulatory function of visibility pertaining to the widow's mourning. For Foucault, power is not simply confined to disciplinary or repressive power but also liberatory power. He draws attention to the coexistence of power with resistances to it. As he puts it, resistance is inscribed as "an underside" or "irreducible opposite" in all power relations (Foucault, 1976, p. 76). Instances of resistance and alternate expressions of *ukuzila* that suit women rather than society and culture were evident in the women's discussion of mourning. The apparent lack of visibility by widowers during mourning in comparison to the women was challenged by some of the women participants. This resistance was evident in verbal expressions of dissatisfaction with the status quo concerning visibility as well as in reports of particular actions.

Some of the women participants attributed the lack of visibility on the widowers' part to the issue of power. This acknowledgement represents a form of resistance to the status quo of men's non-visible mourning.

Extract 18 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW4:** If women were in power/ruled (laughter - as in 'dream on'), it would also be obligatory for men to have a black button to show that he is in mourning, until the

same amount of time for woman has expired, so that people notice wherever he goes that he has lost a wife, if we were in power. But we are not in power. They do whatever they want to do.

Extract 19 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW2:** The person who is made to mourn is the woman. The man does not mourn. He buries his wife during the day and by afternoon you see him outside the homestead.

The expression '*If women were in power/ruled...but we are not in power*' is a clear indication of the women's recognition of gendered power differentials, which is a form of resistance. The power relations were seen as centred around visibility whereby the enforced visibility of woman, who is '*made to mourn*' through special mourning clothes, was viewed as a power issue, with the women positioning themselves as powerless and men as powerful. '*If women were in power/ruled...but we are not in power*' is also a statement of the desire for the same sense of freedom and agency enjoyed by men in the practice of spousal mourning. In addition, it expresses a desire for mutual respect, thus voicing lack of satisfaction with the status quo. At the same time, it conveys a sense of being trapped in powerlessness and of compliance based on the perceived powerlessness, and thus of not being in a position to ever change the status quo. They are thus drawing from a patriarchal discourse, which invests power in men and marginalizes women. They also take a conventional approach of conceptualizing power as purely a matter of domination and the possession of one group, namely, the men, and women as inevitably disempowered victims of male power (Hollway, 1995). The text upholds a homogenous notion of the oppression of women as a group (Mohanty, 1991). Women's perceived sense of powerlessness conveyed in the extract prevents them from making choices thus pressurizing them to submit to mourning through their clothes. By holding this dualistic view of power as something you 'have' or 'have not', the women fail to reflect on their own participation in upholding and propagating the patriarchal discourse.

Verbal expression of resistance was also offered with respect to the amount of time spent in mourning. In extract 18, the women express this dissatisfaction and this is

picked up in extract 19 where the man wastes no time in mourning. Time is thus raised as a symbolic marker of gender: women spend time mourning, whilst men do not; leaving the homestead (sign of no mourning as this is against normative mourning behaviour) the very day the wife is buried.

In extract 18, being in power further allows the men to “*do whatever they want to do*”. For example, they do not restrict movement as per culturally normative behaviour as indicated in ‘*He buries wife during the day and by afternoon you see him outside the homestead.*’ They can thus be portrayed as “controlling subjects who are imbued with agency and women as passive objects” (Tyner & Ogle, 2009, p. 101). This cultural freedom to be in charge of one’s life can be contrasted to the lack thereof voiced by the woman who is *tied down by Xhosa law* (see extract 20 below).

Extract 20 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

Discussing things that are of value and importance regarding *ukuzila*:

**ERW1:** You must mourn and not do bad things or go outside

**R:** Why is that important?

**ERW1:** The family must be seen to be truly in mourning. By the way you behave.

**ERW2:** It is even said that the woman is handling the ‘*ukuzila*’/mourning well. It is like someone who is in jail, who is tied down. She is tied down (direct translation - would be jailed/bound) by Xhosa law.

In this extract, the manner in which the widow conducts herself is highlighted as reflecting on the family because she is “married to the family” (Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008, p. 109). When she conducts herself well, ‘*the family will be seen to be truly in mourning*’. Included in mourning conduct is restricted movement, hence, the comment ‘*she is tied down by Xhosa law*’. This can be contrasted to the man who ‘*buries wife during the day and by afternoon you see him outside the homestead*’. This verbal expression shows an awareness of customs being oppressive of women. Women are seen as being equivalent to prisoners. When mourning conduct is adhered to by the widow, this is rewarded by ‘*the woman is handling the ‘ukuzila’/mourning well*’.

Another verbal expression of resistance was achieved by the invocation of 'Nokhontoni'. 'Nokhontoni' is the name given to a particular kind of person (amongst the AmaXhosa), who is inquisitive and likes to probe things. It carries negative connotations and is designed to silence people, especially females as 'No' in isiXhosa is more often than not used as a prefix for female names, for example, Nomonde, Nomhle etc. It thus encourages silence and passive behaviour.

In the following extract the discussion was about the question of men not mourning by clothes as done by the women:

Extract 21 (Elderly Rural Women: ERW) FG

**ERW** (in unison): The man does not mourn. We are also puzzled by this.

**R**: You are puzzled by this discrepancy.

**ERW**: (in unison) But yho they do!

**R**: What is the explanation for this?

**ERW 1**: We don't know they don't tell us. Men move around. [Murmuring & complaining from other participants] Even if the wife's death is still fresh; they are not supposed to.

**ERW 1**: We were never told [about the reason/s for the discrepancy]. (Laughter) You will be referred to as 'Nokhontoni'. (General laughter) We have no knowledge of the explanation for this differential treatment. We are not supposed to question things.

The participants express dissatisfaction with the gendered order, whereby the man does not mourn, by noting puzzlement. Puzzlement at the discrepancy that highlights power relations is followed by their noting the 'silencing' of women as indicated by '*We are not supposed to question things*'. The murmuring, laughter and general complaining indicate that while they recognise these power relations, they are not duped by them. In addition to expressing resistance as indicated by the irony of laughter, '*we were never told*' implies women at the mercy of men, and of course 'cannot ask' due to fear of being positioned as *Nokhontoni*. Being positioned as *Nokhontoni* makes it hard for the women to raise any feelings of discontent and anger concerning the differential treatment in spousal mourning, whereby '*men do not mourn*'. It could thus be viewed as part of the silencing. At the same time, it requires one to be self-vigilant by disciplining oneself to prevent acquiring this position.

Therefore, '*Nokhontoni*' serves as a control mechanism whereby women are expected to adhere to aspects of spousal mourning that are little understood. The consequence is that the differential treatment remains unexplored, unexplained and consequently, normalized.

There were reports of those who expressed resistance through action. These women wore the clothes but acted contrary to culturally appropriate ways of mourning, thus subverting the whole purpose of 'wearing' or visibility:

Extract 22 (Younger Rural Women: YRW) FG

**R:** others, what have you observed in your village?

Silence

**YRW 4:** Men do what they are not supposed to do. They do not mourn.

**R:** and the women?

**YRW 1:** Even the women nowadays do the wrong things, especially the younger ones. They engage in relationships whilst still wearing the mourning clothes. They even get pregnant with another man whilst still having the mourning clothes on.

Extract 23 (Elderly Urban Woman: EUW) I

**R:** Are there women who behave like the men?

**EUW:** Yes. Lots. Some wear the mourning clothes but act inappropriately. For example, my sister-in-law long before the end of the mourning period was sleeping out. The neighbours asked to '*khulula*'/release her (terminate the mourning period).

**R:** So the women also do the thing of sleeping out?

**EUW:** Yes they do. The family did not do it-the neighbours did. She would go looking for her boyfriend. Such behaviour does not give respect to the clothes.

Extract 24 (Younger Rural Women: YRW) FG

**R:** Is there no choice re mourning? What is the case of 'not wearing' ?

**YRW( all):** No choice

**YRW 3:** They (in-laws) must give you the mourning clothes. You might be cheeky and leave the homestead after the funeral.

From the above extracts, resistance to visibility is accomplished by wearing the mourning clothes and behaving as one pleases, for example, by engaging in an intimate relationship, thus subverting an important aspect concerning the purpose of 'wearing' or visibility. However, this stepping out of the culturally appropriate ways of mourning comes at a price, namely, early termination of the mourning, which is seen in a negative light. Resistance was also achieved by leaving the homestead (husband's home) after the funeral (thus avoiding wearing the mourning clothes), and insisting that you are mourning by heart, an aspect of mourning dealt with below.

The rural homestead is considered to be the cultural space of ancestors and cultural guardians, and certain spaces in the homestead are considered to be sacred as this is where ancestors reside. By leaving the homestead, the woman is partly avoiding the 'wrath of the ancestors' (Jordan, 1960/2004) as 'not wearing' might be considered disrespectful to them. The aspect of ancestors was dealt with extensively in the context section under *AmaXhosa belief system*.

Although some of the women participants showed resistance to the visibility of widows' mourning, the reports of the resistance were accompanied by disapproval thereof. For example, in extract 22, women who engage in relationships during the mourning period are referred to as doing the '*wrong things*'. In Extract 23 they are referred to as acting '*inappropriately*' and as '*cheeky*' in extract 24. This then refers to the fact that patriarchal power relations are not perpetuated by men alone and that women may be reinforcers of particular gendered power relations.

The preceding section underscored women's visibility and highlighted the complexities surrounding it. This section also discussed the forms of resistance employed by the women against visibility. Verbal forms included an expression of the recognition of how visibility is linked to power relations, with the women being overly restricted whilst men '*do whatever they want to do*'. Women also indicated how they are silenced through being labelled as *Nokhontoni*, which forbids them from asking questions. Resistance through action included taking on a lover, which is against mourning behaviour and leaving the rural homestead to avoid offending ancestors by not adhering to custom. In the following section, constructions of 'spousal mourning by behaviour' are explored.

### ***‘Spousal mourning by behaviour’***

The previous section highlighted visibility of the mourner, as reflected in statements such as ‘*a mourner should be seen through the clothes*’. However, a different view was that actions show that one is in mourning and not the clothes. The kinds of actions expected point to the fact that mourning is a time requiring special or different conduct from normal behaviour. Normative mourning actions include abstinence from sexual relations, restricting one’s movement, and other avoidances relating to diet, as well as social interaction. Similar mourning behaviour was underscored by Sossou (2001) in Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast. Sossou (2001) described how widows in these countries are expected to dress in black, fast during the day throughout the mourning period, abstain from sexual activity and may not remarry. The following sections examine the constructions of spousal mourning by behaviour for both men and women.

### ***‘Spousal mourning by behaviour for men’***

Common in both men’s and women’s groups was the construction of spousal mourning for men as ‘*men ought to mourn by behaviour*’ to indicate respect in keeping with isiXhosa cultural norms. For example, they are to restrict movement by not leaving the homestead, thus avoiding going about and mixing with people, practice sexual abstinence, refrain from acts of violence, drunkenness, loud and foul speech. This claim concerning men’s mourning resonates with the research conducted by Pahl, Pienaar and Ndungane (1989).

In extract 25 below, the female participant is responding to the question: *What is the man going to do to show that he is mourning for his wife?*

Extract 25 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW1:** He is going to stay with his children. No “outing” (that is, going out with other women and sleeping outside of the home). He is just going to stay at home with his children.

**Extract 26 (Elderly Urban Man: EUM) FG** (discussing the putting on of a button by men as a marker of mourning)

**EUM 4:** I am hearing you about the button. Sometimes ‘inzilo’/ mourning, yes, is not what you wear which shows that something has happened to me, but it is the actions.

**R:** yes, yes

**EUM4:** Nothing unwholesome comes out of your mouth; neither do you involve yourself in acts of violence when you are mourning. The actions show you are in mourning, mourning for your wife. The respect I show toward people - that goes with the button that the previous speaker is talking about.

**R:** In other words if the button is attached, but without the accompanying actions/behaviour that is not mourning?

**EUM 4:** I have not mourned. That is not mourning.

**R:** But what do you call that if you have the button? Because one will say here is the button I am in mourning? What do the people in the community say about that?

**EUM 4:** They will say I have not mourned for my wife due to the unwholesome talk/rudeness. I do despicable things.

Extract 27 (Young Urban Man: YUM) FG

**YUM 4:** It is true about sleeping outside of the homestead [read abstinence]. It is taken seriously. Also, one needs to drink respectfully and must sleep at home with family members, and abstain from milk and other dairy and fatty products.

From the extracts, one can note how the kind of actions expected in men during mourning are ‘unusual behaviour’ for men under normal circumstances. The implication is that men typically swear, use violence, drink excessively and are womanizers. We see here that men ought to show that they are mourning by engaging in appropriate mourning behaviours such as the ones already cited, ‘*the actions show you are in mourning*’. Furthermore, showing mourning by wearing special mourning clothes is somehow marginalized as reflected in ‘*inzilo/mourning is not what you wear*’, especially if not reflected in behaviour. In addition, lack of appropriate mourning behaviour was regarded as no mourning as reflected in ‘*they will say I have not mourned for my wife due to the unwholesome talk/rudeness*’.

*'Spousal mourning by behaviour for women'*

A common construction by both men and women was that women also ought to show appropriate mourning behaviour. As a result, women who wear clothes without showing appropriate mourning behaviour are regarded as *'just wearing'* mourning clothes and *'not mourning'*:

Extract 28 (Young Rural Women: YRW) FG

**R:** Okay. What about your neighbour with mourning clothes who was moving around with boyfriend. Is she still in mourning?

**YRW** (all): she is not mourning, she is just wearing mourning clothes.

In the following extracts, both widows (*Elderly Urban Widow and Younger Urban Widow*) insisted that they had mourned for their husbands due to the appropriate mourning behaviour they displayed:

Extract 29 (Elderly Urban Widow: EUW) I

**R:** Would you say you were in mourning even though you did not wear black clothes?

**EUW:** I did not wear black clothes. I have worn black clothes (symbolically) by behaviour. I behaved well. It was as though he was still alive, the way I respected him because of his dignity. I always thought of my children and retained his dignity by my behaviour.

Extract 30 (Younger Urban Widow: YUW) I

**R:** Okay, if one were to ask you if you have mourned for your husband, what would you say?

**YUW:** Yes I have mourned for my husband. Because as from his death I never had any affair with anyone, unlike some people I used to see. People used to wear *'izila'*/mourning clothes - black, purple and other colours but asked to be released [early termination] from *'izila'*/mourning clothes because they were pregnant.

**R:** Okay. From what you have just told me about your mourning, you have said you mourned for your husband, but someone might say, no that one did not mourn, she did not put on any mourning clothes whatsoever. So what would be your take on that?

**YUW:** I think when you are in mourning you are not doing it for the world to see, to advertise to the world that you are that woman who has got no husband. I think it is something personal, giving respect to that person you said you love. I take *ukuzila* like that.

These extracts confirm that mourning is showing respect through engaging in appropriate mourning behaviour, such as abstinence from sexual relationships. This showing of mourning by behaviour is contrasted with mourning by clothes without appropriate behaviour, which is regarded as disrespectful. Furthermore, the question of agency is raised, with *ukuzila* regarded as ‘*something personal*’ rather than as something one engages in because of societal or familial expectations. Another construction of mourning was ‘by heart’ and is dealt with in the following section.

### ***‘Spousal mourning by heart’***

Both men and women participants brought up *mourning by heart*. However, the phrase was chiefly employed in reference to men’s mourning. In view of this fact then the focus will be on discussing constructions of spousal mourning by heart for men. This construction of spousal mourning was not perceived as desirable:

Extract 31 (Young Urban Women: YUW) FG

**YUW4:** others say they mourn by heart.

**R:** Okay, so one of the explanations is that men mourn by heart. What is your understanding of mourning by heart?

**YUW 4:** You can never be sure that he is really in mourning if mourning by heart because nothing changes in his life. If he has been going out, he will still go out with his friends. Nothing shows he is in mourning.

In extract 31 heart mourning is problematized. Dissonance between mourning by heart and appropriate mourning behaviour is highlighted. For example, instead of restricting movement as expected of someone in mourning, the man ‘*will still go out with his friends*’ and ‘*nothing changes in his life*’. This is contrary to normative behaviour during mourning which should be different to normal behaviour as raised in the section on *constructions of spousal mourning by behaviour*.

Extract: 32 (Key cultural informant: KCI) I

**KCI:** 'Ukuzila' is not mourning by clothing.

**R:** Okay. Please elaborate.

**KCI:** It is mourning by heart and mind.[inner mourning]

**R:** okay. What does it mean to mourn by heart and mind?

**KCI:** Everything you say and do is respecting. Everything you do respects to the extent that even if you are 'not wearing' mourning clothes someone might observe your behaviour and remark that "it seems this person is in mourning, judging by the way s/he talks".

In extract 32, an elaboration on inner mourning/mourning by heart is undertaken. Heart mourning must be inferred from one's mourning behaviour, in the absence of visibility through a marker. This is different from the psychologised notion of mourning that involves denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (DABDA) as pointed out in the chapter on mourning. Mourning 'by heart' is linked to actions which give respect thus equating and conflating mourning 'by heart' to mourning by behaviour. However, as pointed out in extract 31, men who claim to mourn by heart do not show the necessary respect as indicated by their behaviour, for example, not restricting their movement.

### ***'No mourning'***

This construction referred to men only. However, women's 'wearing' without appropriate mourning behaviour was also categorized as 'no mourning' and as *just wearing mourning clothes*. Although '*men ought to mourn by behaviour*', according to cultural norms /societal expectations and as stated in the section on constructions of mourning by behaviour, a frequently occurring phrase in both the men's and women's focus group discussions and the interviews was '*men do not mourn*'. However, there was complexity regarding its meaning. Whilst for some this meant '*not changing into mourning clothes*' in contrast to the woman, others were referring to the fact that he does not even bother to show mourning by displaying appropriate mourning behaviour such as restricting his movement. This is apparent in the extracts below:

Extract 33 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW 1:** Men do not mourn. We are puzzled by this. We are the ones who mourn. We mourn a lot. They move around even the day you are taken to the mortuary. They don't mourn. We don't know why. He is not supposed to be going around whilst the wife has just been buried.

Extract 34 (Young Urban Woman: UYW) FG

**UYW :** Yho! (an exclamation) the men do not mourn. The first day he hears the wife has died he will be shocked just like everybody and return to work the following day. They do not mourn. He does not wear mourning clothes. For him it is business as usual. He goes to work if he is working. So compared to us women, no they don't mourn, one might shave hair but it's rare.

Extract 35 (Younger Rural Woman: YRW) FG

**R:** Okay, I hear what you are saying re Xhosa culture. Now, from your own observation, do the men mourn according to the cultural norm?

**YRW3:** Nowadays they drink liquor the same day the wife dies; they go out although they are not supposed to do that. They do not mourn. And if he had a girlfriend before the wife died, he continues with the relationship. And he does so openly.

Extract 36 (Elderly Urban Widower: EUW) I

**EUW:** Some men don't appear to be mourning and the behaviour does not indicate, but we can't say he has not mourned. It is not an unfounded perception still. Most men don't mourn. The women mourn visibly-even by restricting their behaviour, but men move around.

In these extracts men's behaviour when the wife is dead is problematized owing to the disjuncture between what is culturally normative behaviour and what the men are doing, hence the puzzle. For example, in all the extracts, the men act contrary to the norm of restricting one's movement during mourning and also do not abstain from liquor and sex (extract 35).

Men's lack of mourning is highlighted in the extracts, with the woman in extract 33 expressing both an element of surprise and resistance. In defence of men's lack of

apparent mourning the widower in extract 36 claims *'but we can't say he has not mourned'* thus drawing on the psychological notion of mourning. In this kind of mourning, there is no visibility to the mourning, either through clothes or through actions.

In extract 35, the researcher is invoking the notion of 'culture' and the question asked is somehow framing the participant's response. This is an instance in which researcher reflexivity is applicable, as the researcher is not neutral but part and parcel of the research process, in this case, of data collection.

### ***Concluding comments on current constructions of mourning***

From the discussions on constructions of spousal mourning, *ukuzila*/spousal mourning emerged as a highly contested and gendered term. Different conceptions of what it means to mourn for one's spouse ranged from those that focused on visibility by clothing, to behaviour through to mourning by heart. Furthermore, the multiple notions of *ukuzila* were divided along gender lines. Whilst constructions of spousal mourning for women focused on its visibility, with non-compliance resulting in some form of discipline, men's mourning appeared to be optional, with men *'doing as they please'*, mourning by heart, by behaviour or not at all and without any consequences. Others drew on the notion of inner mourning. At the same time, some forms of *ukuzila* were marginalized as reflected in *'she is not mourning, she is just wearing mourning clothes'*, when visibility was not accompanied by actions. Overall the focus of the data was more on 'difference' being on clothes for women and on behaviour for men, even though latter was found lacking. This lack of mourning by men was brought into question.

Furthermore, the issue of visibility was linked to surveillance. Visibility allowed for both self-policing and monitoring by others, to see if the mourner (read woman) was behaving according to the culturally normative mourning behaviour. Visibility was thus used as a regulatory mechanism. In conclusion, spousal mourning emerged as a decidedly complex, multifaceted and contested contingent practice, especially in its contemporary practice. In the following section, current constructions of historical practices related to mourning, with the view to investigating how these might be used

to justify current constructions and power relations and to identifying any disjuncture, are discussed.

#### CONSTRUCTIONS OF SPOUSAL MOURNING AS A HISTORICAL VERSUS AS A CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

Gergen (1985, p. 267) asserts that we are fundamentally historical and cultural beings and our views of, and knowledge about, the world are the “products of historically situated interchanges among people”. Putting it slightly differently, Hollway (1984, p. 236) has pointed out that “Practices and meanings have histories”. Therefore, meanings ascribed to *‘ukuzila’* identified in the first research question and discussed in the previous section are acknowledged as historically and socially specific and consequently contingent. Therefore, it is presumed that it is the current constructions of historical practices that will inform current understandings and power relations. In other words, the researcher is not interested in what ‘really’ happened but rather in how the participants understand what happened in the past and how this ties with their current talk on spousal mourning. Such an understanding is in line with discourse analysis, as Parker (2005) has pointed out that for discourse analysts, it is important to show other instances of a discourse, tracing their source and evolution and what they meant as they emerged and how the discourses have shifted historically.

This section analyses current constructions of how spousal mourning was practiced in the past as well as current constructions of historical circumstances and how they affected mourning. Transformations have occurred and continue to do so with respect to this aspect of the life of the AmaXhosa. Some of these have been shaped by the socio-political developments under apartheid and others by circumstances in post-apartheid South Africa (refer to context section). The focus is on how people understand what happened in the past and how this ties with their current talk on spousal mourning. One of the significant features of spousal mourning that emerged from the section on current constructions of spousal mourning was the wearing of special mourning clothes in order to facilitate visibility. This turned out to be infused with gender power relations, the spotlight being on women’s visibility. Changes in the practice of spousal mourning from what participants see as its ‘indigenous’ form

with respect to the wearing of special mourning clothes, 'hiding' versus movement and length of mourning period are examined.

***Mourning by clothes/visibility: men***

With respect to mourning by clothes, participants spoke about how a man in mourning used to be marked as such by wearing special mourning clothes in order for people to identify him as widowed without having to be told. This was done in order to show respect for the deceased spouse. From the discussion with the key cultural informant, it emerged that historically, men used to mourn by wearing black from head to toe to mark them as widowed:

Extract 37 (Key cultural informant: KCI) I

R: Mh. Now what happens to the husband who has lost his wife?

KCI: He is going to do things differently. He is going to mourn by clothing.

R: Okay

KCI: He sits by the kraal then after the funeral for mourning he puts on a black hat, black trousers, black jacket and a black arm band.

However, this has since changed as reflected in extract 38 below.

Extract 38 (Elderly Rural Man: ERM) FG

**ERM 2:** Eh the woman wears black clothes up to the black head gear, the whole outfit is black.

**R:** Why is it that the man wears a black arm band, and the woman wears black clothes?

**ERM 2:** It shows that he is a man; he is mourning a man, the reason for that hasn't changed.

**ERM 1:** To explain to you mother, the reason is that the man in the olden days was someone who was away at the white man where he worked.

ERM 2 and R: oh, okay

**ERM 1:** He is at the white man, he cannot wear those clothes, thus he would wear the black arm band on top of his work clothes, on the jacket, to show that he is someone who has lost a loved one (partner). That is how it was done.

The two extracts reveal constructions of the shift in men's mourning as well as constructions of the historical circumstance that account for it. In the first extract, the widower used to *mourn by clothing*, as indicated in the black attire he would wear from head to toe. His mourning was thus visible. In the second one, only an armband is used to mark his mourner status due to his being a worker in the 'white man's place. Thus spousal mourning reflects the changes due to transformation of society as a result of colonial infiltration. Whereas the indigenous economy of the AmaXhosa was based on an agricultural and pastoral subsistence, the arrival of the colonialists brought about a shift to a capitalist economy. The effects of colonialist infiltration on AmaXhosa cultural practices have been dealt with extensively under the context section. As a result of colonialism, the development of industries like mining, commerce and agriculture in the cities required a lot of labour. As a strategy to meet this need, the government of the day pressurised the men in the rural homesteads to pay taxes (Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1974; Packard, 2009). Consequently, the taxes were too much for the rural people to pay, and they were forced to seek paid work away in the cities, away from their rural homesteads. Hence the extract makes reference to the man as '*someone who was away at the white man where he worked*'. Women were thus left behind to look after the homestead and children as men sought work as per their provider role. Working 'at the white man' brought about hybridised ways of doing things, such as wearing clothes that were considered appropriate in that space. It also reconfigured the role of the woman in the family as she had to assume both her role and that of the man.

### ***Mourning by clothes: visibility of women***

According to the participants, in the past, a woman in mourning was also marked by wearing clothes inside out before the funeral so that people would identify her as widowed without having to be told. This was then followed by wearing black (also current) from head to toe as clothes of mourning after the funeral (see above extract 39). This change was reflective of a colonial imposition being taken up as the use of black was enforced on widows whose husbands had died during the war and was the mourning colour used to mark them to receive stipends (Zide, 1984). Prior to the arrival of the settlers, the colour of mourning was white (Hirst, 2011). This was also

pointed out by some of the participants. Therefore the use of black is a hybridized form of mourning informed by colonial infiltration.

Extract 39 (Key cultural informant: KCI) I

KCI: Mourning starts on the day you receive the news of bereavement. From then onwards, you do not touch anything because you lose energy and become weak.

R: Yes

KCI: The women then prepare you by changing your clothes. The way they do it is by making you wear your clothes inside out from head to toe.

R: What does the wearing of clothes inside out signify?

KCI: It signifies that you are sad, because of your loss. People will know that you have been bereaved.

R: Mh

KCI: That is the beginning of mourning. Everyone will know by your inside out clothes that you are the one who has lost a husband.

Historically, therefore, both widow and widower were customarily expected to publicly display mourning by wearing the clothing of *'ukuzila'*, the specific marker of a widower being black from head to toe as revealed by the key cultural informant in extract 39, the particular way of wearing the 'clothes of mourning' does not only signify a particular status (widow), but also an emotional state *'that you are sad'*. In the following extract, the participant speaks to the shift in women's mourning as well as the historical circumstances surrounding it.

Extract 40 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW 1:** But now these changes and various dresses are because people are employed. You cannot go to work with *'imibhaco'* [traditional Xhosa dress]. You also cannot go to the doctor with *'umibhaco'*.

R: Why?

**ERW 1:** Because it's a white person's place. The white person would give you overall and small three cornered head scarf [general laughter] and not the huge head gear (called staff) for example, when going to work for white man in the kitchens or when going to the doctor. In the past, there were no doctors. Later on, it was education and civilization. Now you also see purple and other colours.

Mh, mh, General laughter

The changes were seen as subject to particular socio-historic conditions such as the arrival of the white person and with that employment, going to doctors, education and as an imposition by colonialism and civilization. Over time, expediency in the wake of current demands of the economic system meant that the woman also had to work. The introduction of paid work in the '*white person's place*' brought about the shift from wearing traditional isiXhosa dress – '*umbhaco*' to wearing an overall and three cornered head scarf. With the advent of '*education and civilization*', '*purple and other colours*' and "German prints" (see extract 6), were used in addition to black. The arrival of colonialists thus brought about diverse and contested practices as the widow's marking could be in the form of German prints, church colours due to the influence of missionaries, black or any colour the person chooses, as captured in '*Now you also see purple and other colours*' depending on the family.

The hybridity of dress code highlights the complexities brought about by colonialism. In spite of the transformation of society as well as in the clothes of mourning, it is worth noting that the widow remains marked. In this study, data indicated the various notions of culture that were held, for example, as something dynamic as implied in the various expressions of mourning through '*visibility by clothing*'. Visibility has taken different forms over time, especially for women as indicated in the discussions. The following section looks at '*mourning by restricting movement*'.

#### ***Mourning by restricting movement: men***

The norm in AmaXhosa traditional and cultural practices, according to participants, is that the spouse and immediate family should restrict movement and refrain from going to places of amusement and other social ceremonies. This was also brought up by a younger woman from the rural area as reflected in the extract below:

Extract 41 (Younger Rural Woman: YRW) FG

**YRM 2:** The man regardless of age when his wife has died, makes preparation for the funeral, the man does not go out to where there are a lot of people, does not go to places of entertainment, for example, to the shebeen, to town, no wearing of shorts or

sleeveless clothes. He stays at home or in front of his kraal. That is mourning before the funeral.

Extract 42(Younger Rural Man: YRM) FG

**YRM 1:** Men have changed their mourning behaviour. If the wife is buried on a Saturday, the following day, Sunday he goes to church. But in the past one would not go to where there are lots of people.

In the above extract, *'He stays at home or in front of his kraal'* pertains to the widower's mourning behaviour in the past and indicates that he was expected to restrict movement as per culturally appropriate mourning behaviour. Pahl and Ndungane (1989) have asserted this aspect of mourning in their definition of *'ukuzila'*. However, this has changed and the practice is not currently adhered to as reflected in *'Men have changed their mourning behaviour'*, because he now moves around, going to church where there are a lot of people.

### ***Mourning by restricting movement: women***

Researchers have indicated that according to isiXhosa traditional and cultural practices related to mourning, the widow is expected to isolate herself from people/community for a specific period due to the belief that she is contaminated by death (Bongela, 2001; Hirst, 2006; Pauw, 1975; Soga, 1937/89). In the past, this was achieved by restricting the widow to the forest as reflected in the extract below:

Extract 43 (Key cultural Informant: KCI) I

**KCI:** In isiXhosa, you attend the funeral wearing your clothes inside out. You wait for the others to put on you the mourning clothes after the funeral. On the day of the funeral, after the funeral you do not go home from the grave yard. Certain women will take you to the forest.

**R:** From the graveyard to the forest?

**KCI:** Yes. You stay in the forest and collect firewood. Then at dusk you go home and leave the firewood outside. The following day you wake up in the morning and go to the forest and bring firewood late afternoon and you do this for 4 weeks. But in the

olden days you stayed in the forest and kept yourself busy by doing handiwork and cooking for yourself.

According to the key cultural informant the purpose of this ritual seclusion was to rid the widow of the contamination which would rub off on the animals. Literature indicates the use of ritual seclusion for purposes of purification of pollution acquired through death (Douglas, 1966; Hirst, 2006; Pauw, 1975). However, due to economic considerations, the woman now is employed and there is no time to sit around at home or in the forest. This is one of the effects of colonialism because both men and women did not work for paid wages before the advent of colonialism. Postcolonial feminism raises the issue of working women with respect to dual career women who are still required to work at home as if not working elsewhere (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982), due to household matters being considered to be their domain. The woman is now given a few days off work and has to then resume her duties as illustrated in the following extract:

Extract 44 (Younger Urban Women: YUW) FG

**YUW4:** Others mourn differently. For instance my mom was mourning in 2008. She was working - no difference. She was given two weeks.

The extract points to the contingent nature of the practice. This can be linked to postcolonial setting in which the after effects of colonialism are still felt, in this case, the introduction of paid work as pointed out in the context section. Although the mourning period of the woman normatively takes a year, this woman was given a period of two weeks because she was a working woman. Time also emerged as a symbolic marker of gender, with women taking time to mourn, no matter how little, with men accused of not mourning.

#### ***Length of mourning period: women***

As already pointed out, the historically 'culturally normative' length of mourning period for spousal mourning is a year, but contingent on factors such as whether the woman is working, in which case the mourning period could be drastically reduced.

This normative length of mourning was confirmed by the cultural informant when discussing women's mourning:

Extract 45 (Key cultural informant: KCI) I

**KCI:** Nowadays no one goes to the forest. As a mourner, you brew 'utywala bokuhamba' (traditional brew that allows you to go around) to allow you to ask for things from neighbours before the 'khulula' custom takes place. Traditionally the 'khulula' would be after a full year.

However, this has since changed:

Extract 46 (Elderly Rural Men: ERM) FG

**ERM P (Mgubo):** Everything has changed because this is how I would put it: a woman now, I'm trying to open your mind up too, a woman no longer mourns for the whole year because of the number of people dying. Maybe she takes up to 6 months and changes her clothes, because one thing happens after the other. It is because things have changed, it is not like before. And now they say she must be released from mourning sooner, because someone else has died. Let me put that straight to you so that it's clear to you. That is how things have now changed.

Extract 47 (Elderly Urban widower: EUW) I

**EUW:** It is no longer cast in stone that it is going to take one year to mourn for a spouse, as it used to be traditionally. Now you negotiate. Only family members and close neighbours are present. You are also going to discuss about the length of the mourning period. For example, the family may agree and say that this woman is working and is moving up and down, so it is best to give her six months for mourning and not the full year. But you cannot respect a husband for less than six months.

From these extracts, we see how participants indicate that the length of mourning has been shifting, from a year, to 6 months, then 3 months, depending on the circumstance. The participant in extract 46 has cited the frequency of deaths, which is on the increase due to HIV/Aids, as one the reason for the shortened mourning time. The other instance cited is that of *moving up and down*, necessitated by 'working'. This calls to attention the presence of economic considerations since one is not

supposed to be up and about during mourning. This necessity around economics is an effect of colonialism, as the site of labour (*kwamlungu*/white man's place) for the woman is removed from the private domain of the homestead. This alerts us to the presence of variability as well as contingency issues in the practice. However, the allusion to '*you cannot respect a husband for less than six months*', serves to counteract the contingency of 'modern' life for the working woman, drawing on the respect-*hlonipha* discourse. This discourse is discussed further in the next chapter.

### ***Solemnity versus celebration***

The participants compared the sombre nature of mourning as practiced in the past with the more celebratory form of contemporary mourning. They cited the lavish funerals and *after tears* parties as the newer forms of mourning practices. This was viewed as a consequence of civilization, western influence and Christianity.

Extract 48 (Younger Urban Male: YUM) FG

**YUM 2:** Mourning is no longer taken seriously, it is now different. There is no respect. Friends bury today, then 'after tears'. Things have changed.

**YUM 1:** The problem starts with the funeral. Now it is all about food\_ whereas it used to be 'inkobe' [corn grains] depending on how much they received.

**YUM 4:** A new belief in Christianity has influenced these changes. It says by mourning, death is glorified and people see other people are dying all the time, now they are celebrating the closure of one chapter.

'*After tears*' is a celebratory party held in honour of the person's life and is considered as not showing respect by some. '*People are dying all the time*' is cited as another reason for celebrating the life they lived rather than dwelling on the sadness of their death. Because people are dying '*all the time*', people have become somewhat numbed by death. As a result of the celebratory mood, food and drink flow and this is compared to *inkobe* / corn grains that used to be served to show the sombre nature of the occasion. All of these changes were blamed on 'Western culture' and Christianity, which were seen as contributing a significant part in alienating the AmaXhosa from their culture and belief system.

### *Concluding comments on section*

The analysis of this section brought to the fore the cultural dynamics and contradictions resulting from historical renditions of spousal mourning that have shaped its current constructions. The changes were seen as largely resulting from colonialism, civilization and Christianity. The historical renditions thus allowed people to call on culture (used as a bounded static entity) that existed prior to colonialism (myth of origin). In turn, this allowed for statements of disapproval of current practices.

Discussion of past practices required explanations of reasons for change in order to understand current practices. Hence there was reference to colonialism, economic pressures and the reality of HIV/AIDS. What is interesting to note is that these explanations of change did not refer to the changing gendered power relations.

As a result of the changes, some of the cultural norms such as restricting movement, wearing special mourning clothes and length of mourning have had to be adjusted. This points to the fact that the practice of *ukuzila* has not remained static, but is contingent, historical and contextual. The changes have brought about certain dilemmas such as wearing the clothes without restricting movement as highlighted in the section. Such women were seen in a bad light because although it was accepted that their behaviour was necessitated by circumstances, they were still seen as contradicting the cultural norm.

In addition to the economic considerations resulting from colonial infiltration, moving from traditional spaces (*ezilalini*) to urban areas where there are no ancestors has meant that some of the indigenous forms of mourning had been compromised as the urban environment is not conducive to the practice of some aspects of culture. For example, one of the reasons advanced for showing respect particularly by the married woman has been the presence of ancestors in and around the kraal in the rural homestead. This aspect was discussed at length in the context section. What remained though was the visibility of the widow although it took different forms. However, visibility of the widower was rendered a discontinued practice.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter explored both current constructions of spousal mourning and constructions of spousal mourning as a historical versus as a contemporary practice. Current constructions of spousal mourning encompassed ‘mourning by clothes’, ‘mourning by behaviour’, ‘mourning by clothes and behaviour’ and ‘mourning by heart’, thus pointing to the multiplicity of the practice. Showing one’s mourning turned out to be highly contested. The main issue that emerged in the constructions was around visibility. Whilst some emphasized visibility through clothing, others emphasized visibility through behaviour as a way of showing respect to the deceased. In addition, visibility turned out to be highly gendered, with the woman being coerced into mourning visibly by wearing ‘clothes of mourning’. Various justifications for the widow’s visibility were highlighted. The justifications included protection from predators; protecting others from pollution; she shows respect for the ancestors; she avoids stigmatisation and she demonstrates love for her husband. Based on these justifications, self-surveillance as well as monitoring by others to ensure mourning according to ‘culturally normative’ behaviour was encouraged; and her movement and sexuality were regulated. This section also covered how visibility was resisted, which was through verbal expressions and by actions.

Historical renditions of spousal mourning and its ties with current trends revealed its contingent nature. For example, it brought to the fore how the economic context has influenced grieving practices, for instance, through a shorter mourning period, as the mourner (read woman) has to go back to work. Economic considerations also featured with respect to visibility, whereby different clothes to ‘go back to work’ (seen as a different cultural space) replaced the culturally acceptable ‘clothes of mourning’. In summary, this section revealed how participants understand spousal mourning as being shaped by the history of South Africa. Socio-political developments such as colonialist infiltration have brought about hybridised ways of mourning. Some socio-economic developments such as having to work for a living thus moving away from the homestead to an area requiring a different dress code also contributed to hybridised mourning. Socio-cultural changes were brought about with the influence of German Settlers and the wearing of ‘German prints’ as an acceptable dress code, in lieu of the black one. These various contexts were discussed in the

context section of the introduction. However, women's visibility through clothing has been one factor that remained unchanged, the only changes effected in the form taken by visibility in spite of resistance expressed concerning its discriminatory nature, whilst men's visibility had been discontinued over time.

In the following chapter an attempt is made at making sense of the maintaining factors with regard to women's visibility. The chapter explores the discourses and subject positions deployed in men's and women's constructions of *ukuzila*. It is argued that it is these discourses that shed light on the reasons for the continuity of visibility in spite of the recognition of its discriminatory nature.

**CHAPTER 7:**  
**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION - DISCOURSES MEDIATING THE**  
**CONSTRUCTIONS OF SPOUSAL MOURNING**

INTRODUCTION

The constructions of spousal mourning explored in the previous chapter are not regarded as personal constructs but as emanating from social language and discourses. This resonates with the construal of discourses as “cultural resources” and as shared ways in which people make sense of things within a given culture or context (Banister et al., 1994, p. 92). In this chapter, the discourses that mediated the constructions of how the participants understood the differential treatment of women and men with regard to mourning are identified and explored. The discourses were strongly informed by the distinction between gender categories and were thus not neutral. They included the familial-*ukwenda* discourse, male sexual drive discourse, respect-*hlonipha* discourse and religious discourse. Discourses proffer ‘subject positions’ which to some degree prescribe certain ways of thinking, speaking, behaving and feeling as well as expected roles, rights and responsibilities within the them (Davies & Harré, 1999; Hollway, 1989). In addition to identifying and exploring discourses from which the constructions draw, this chapter also considers the subject positioning/s made available by these discourses for both men and women. In view of the fact that these positions entail differential access to power, the extent to which certain possibilities for action are opened up or closed down within each ‘subject position’ is explored.

THE ‘FAMILIAL-UKWENDA DISCOURSE’

‘Family’ is not confined to the Western notion of a nuclear family because there are different family models. For example, among the AmaXhosa you find the family comprises of the immediate ‘nuclear’ family, the extended family or clan as well as the ‘living dead’, that is, the ancestors. As discussed in the context section of the first chapter, the ancestors are believed to carry on partaking in the daily affairs of the family even though they are not physically seen (Bongela, 2001; Burmann, 1984;

Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Hirst, 2005; Khabela, 1996; Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1994; Mbithi, 1989; Mkhize, 2004; Pauw, 1975; Soga, 1937/89; Solomon, 1986; Zide (1984). The AmaXhosa notion of ancestors and their role within the family has been covered in the introductory chapter under the section titled *AmaXhosa belief system*.

In a familial discourse, as used by some researchers, relationships are depicted as revolving around a nuclear, heterosexual family (and the extended family in this case) as though it were natural and universal, and the norm (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982). The family according to this discourse is hierarchically organised, consists of the husband, regarded as the head of the family, followed by the wife and then the children at the bottom of the hierarchy. Millett (1990) and Somerville (2000) have used the familial discourse to underscore the links between the family and patriarchy, whereby men in society have power over women. Millett (1990) and Somerville (2000) have also employed the familial discourse to underline how the family as used in this discourse serves as a site for the reproduction of these gendered power relations with the man having authority over the entire household.

However, the portrayal of the nuclear family as central in familial discourse has been problematized in the literature, for example, by Barrett and McIntosh (1982) and Blain (1994). Various models of families exist, for example, single parent families, mixed or reconstituted families and same-sex parent families. According to Murray (1981, p. 100), an 'extended family' is "an aggregate of people, variously related to an individual, who gather on particular occasions, such as ancestor rituals, marriage feasts and funerals, and who may participate in processes of dispute resolution". From Murray's definition, the nuclear family is rendered inadequate in representing 'family' outside Western contexts, as it excludes the recognition of the living dead as family members, albeit that they are unseen. It is in light of this consideration that I have coined the term *familial-ukwenda*, which is an extension of the familial discourse. The 'familial-ukwenda discourse' is centred on the idea that "*wendela emzini*", you the woman are "married to the household", that is, the nuclear family and wider extended family (Gcingca-Ndolo, p. 109, 2008). If one is married to the household, then an unequal relationship with those you are married to is automatically invoked in the sense that there is a hierarchy of elders and ancestors who are revered. This can be contrasted to being married to your partner or husband as this relationship

invokes some degree of equality. Consequently, the married woman assumes an inferior position in the familial-*ukwenda* discourse.

Accordingly, marriage, which is meant to be a joining together of man and woman, turns out to be a social agreement between the family of the man and the family of the woman, with a complex series of arrangements and transactions designed to cement the relationship, such as payment of '*lobola*' from the man's family to the prospective brides family (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Mandela, 1993; Mayer & Mayer, 1994; Soga, 1937/1989; Solomon, 1986; Sossou, 20002). The aspect of marriage among the AmaXhosa has been dealt with extensively in the introductory chapter under 'family' and marriage among the AmaXhosa.

When the participants in a rural elderly women's focus group were asked to respond to the question: *How should he proceed with mourning and why?*, it became apparent that the 'familial-*ukwenda* discourse' plays a central role in the practice of spousal mourning as reflected in the following extracts:

Extract 49 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW 1:** The bereaved husband must make the necessary preparations...As he is young, maybe he's got two children, he must prepare everything pertaining to the death. Then the elders will say he must look for another wife to be a mother to the children since their mother has died, so she can look after them.

Extract 50 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**R:** Now let's say it's the wife who has lost a husband at 25 years. Okay? What is the procedure? What is going to happen?

**ERW 1:** This young wife is going to mourn. Her in-laws are going to make mourning clothes for her.

Extract 51 (Younger Urban Male: YUM) FG

**YUM 4:** The man is at an advantage in that the family will say he needs someone to look after the children.

**YUM 2:** To support that, a man also needs someone to do the washing even though his kids are old enough to do it for him. But to face reality, the man cannot do certain things by himself.

Extract 52(Younger Urban Women: YUW) FG

**YUW 4:** When it comes to the wife's mourning, the family decides if it's six months and which colour, but for the man, he does as he wishes the same day and he can remove the hat anytime.

In the above extracts, the text springs to life a network of relationships between: husband, wife, mother, in-laws, children, marriage and elders. This alerts us to the operation of a 'familial-*ukwenda* discourse' in the text, in which multiple power relations operate in the creation and maintenance of the family in relation to mourning. The elders and the extended family in extracts 49 and 50 assist the man in reconstituting his ruptured nuclear family. This entails looking for a *wife to be the mother to the children*, thus justifying the breaking of traditional mourning behaviour. For the women, the focus of the extended family is on helping her with creating visibility. This discrepancy points to the gendered roles within the familial discourse.

Traditional notions of femininity and masculinity prescribe specific gender roles within the family, such as women as home makers (stay at home) and nurturers of the children, and the man as provider who is expected to go to work. As part of the patriarchal 'culture' women are expected to be submissive to their husbands (and men in general) and men to be dominant. The gendered division of labour has been extended to the 'work of mourning' and has been evident in the practice of *ukuzila*. For example, women are restricted to the home for protracted periods and men leave the homestead as providers for the family. This has serious implications for *ukuzila* when the husband who is considered a provider dies, and the widow has to take care of the family financially, especially in the discussion surrounding the contested issue of visibility. The widow has to work and this means moving around whilst in mourning clothes, which is frowned upon. Power dynamics in the family decision making process are highlighted in extract 52 whereby the man '*does as he wishes*' (in line with his status as 'head') whereas for the woman '*the family decides*' (because she is married to the family). Also, with reference to time, the woman is expected to

mourn for 6 months whereas the man may decide not to mourn '*the same day*' or stop at '*anytime*'. The man thus enjoys 'cultural freedom' in the family context whereas the woman who is married into the household has limited agency in her mourning.

Furthermore, in this discourse there is stereotypical division of labour by sex (Connell, 2002) when it comes to domestic responsibilities, informed by notions of femininity and masculinity. For example, as portrayed in the text a gendered parenting role of the wife as looking after the children is invoked, thus appealing to the domesticity of women whilst the father's role is understood as non-domestic and that of provider. Such constructions of femininity have implications for women's ability to move. For example, looking after the children means one has to stay at home thus confining her to the private domain. The familial-*ukwenda* discourse thus makes a split between the public and private spheres, assigning the former to the man as active and partaking in public activities, and the latter to the woman who is characterized as confined within the household, doing chores and looking after the family. In the extract, we see the man's mourning as active, for example, '*he must prepare everything pertaining to the death*', thereafter '*he must look for another wife*' whilst that of the woman is passive and focused on the clothes she wears and how decisions are made by the family. In turn, these gendered roles are treated as norm and reality, thus masking the power relations at work.

In addition, within the family structure, children are positioned as requiring constant care from the woman whose major role is expected to be a "good wife and mother" (Mamabolo, Langa & Kiguwa, 2009). This conventional sex role is informed by the discourse of gender as social norm and is regarded as natural (Harris, Lea & Foster, 1995). In this discourse, "societal rules are reified and externalized thereby providing an objective base for explanation" (Harris et al., 1995, p.176). This discourse renders domestic responsibilities inflexible, with men regarded as breadwinners who cannot always be around children. Women are regarded as home makers since biologically children need their mothers. The effect of the texts in extracts 48 and 49 would be that the man would be allowed to remarry, in order to get a caretaker for the children. For this to happen, he would have to be released from the agreed upon mourning period as having conjugal relations whilst still in mourning would contaminate him (Pauw, 1990). The question of pollution and women in mourning has been dealt with

in the context section under the subheading ‘*Understandings/Narratives of ‘African belief’ and notions of (woman’s) sexuality*’. A widower is thus encouraged to undertake the challenge of picking up the pieces and to continue with his life. However, women, even after the mourning period is over, are frowned upon when they remarry (Mtshemla, 2004).

The following section examines subject positioning/s within the familial-*ukwenda* discourse and the power and powerlessness invested in them. An assortment of subject positions open to women within the familial-*ukwenda* discourse included woman as *mendi*, and as domestic carer, cleaner and nurturer, and men as ‘heads’.

### ***The woman is ‘mendi’***

Researchers have indicated that the family unit in isiXhosa ‘culture’ is a highly gendered space in which persons are offered recognition based on age, gender and marital status (Bongela, 2001). For example, it distinguishes between women born in the family and those who belong to the family by virtue of having married into it, known as *mendi*. This title emphasizes that one’s marriage is not focused exclusively on the husband but also to the entire family, a process referred to as *ukwenda*. *Mendi* is “married to the homestead” and clan (Bongela, 2001; Mayer & Mayer, 1974, p. 216). There are also power differentials between older and younger *mendi*, with the former imbued with power over the latter. *Mendi* is thus a cultural-familial subject position that is available to the married woman only. *Mendi* entrenches unequal power relations between the married woman (*mendi*) and women in the husband’s home, as well as with males in the family. This is a clear operation of the patriarchal system whereby power invested in the men is extended to the women linked to them such as the *mendi*’s sisters-in-law, her father-in-law’s sisters and her mother-in-law. On a positive note, *mendi* also has rights and privileges that a mistress would not have. For example, Ramphela (1996) has documented how she could not mourn by clothing for her partner Steve Biko although she wished to do so, since she was his mistress.

The *mendi* subject position also carries connotations of being policed and inscribed by femininity, for example, through dress code: wearing of distinctive clothing; and

‘sexual’ and other behaviour. For instance, *mendi* must wear very long skirts or dresses, preferably covering the ankles, must always wear a head scarf and keep away from certain spaces which are deemed to be occupied by ancestors, for example the kraal (Bongela, 2001; Mayer & Mayer, 1974; Soga, 1937/1989). This particularly applies in rural areas which tend to be very hierarchical and patriarchal.

The distinction of *mendi* as an outsider in her married home was put forward as an explanation for the differential mourning between men and women by both men and women:

Extract 53 (Elderly Rural Women: ERW) FG

**ERW** (in unison): The man does not mourn. We are also puzzled by this.

**ERW1**: Because he is not ‘mendi’. She (‘mendi’) is therefore obligated to mourn. This is not her home. The man is going to mourn by behaviour.

Extract 54 (Younger Urban Male: YUM) FG

**YUM4**: Men are not deep in mourning

**R**: How come?

**YUM4**: The woman is more visible I think, so she wears mourning clothes. She does not belong here [in the husband’s family] because she is ‘mendi’. As a result, a lot of demands/restrictions are made on her mourning.

Extract 55 (Younger Urban Female: YUW) FG

**R**: Please explain why the man is doing as he pleases whilst the wife waits.

**YUW 3**: It is submission. She is married into this family. She is ‘mendi’. She can’t talk back...she does not belong here. My aunt did not want to wear black. Because she is married into the family, she had no choice. Everywhere she went, she had to put on the mourning clothes.

Practically, since you are *mendi* in the family you marry into, you are always regarded as an outsider as reflected in ‘*you don’t belong here*’. In extracts 53 to 55, the participants refer to belonging. The *mendi* position thus implies obligations without belonging, a quite powerless position. *Mendi* can thus be regarded as a form of discrimination that marginalizes married women. The subject position of ‘*mendi*’ has

constraining effects for her, for example, limited rights and voice as reflected in '*she can't talk back*'. She should "talk only a little" using a subdued voice (Mayer & Mayer, 1974, p. 217). *Mendi* therefore assumes a subordinated position with limited choice of action and constraints in behaviour compared to the women who are born into the family as reflected in '*she had no choice*'. '*Mendi*'s roles and responsibilities are basically to follow prescriptions, as in '*made to mourn*', with no room for agency, unlike the women born in the family and men who '*do as they please*'. Failure to comply is regarded as disrespect.

In order to ensure this docile behaviour, a special session known as *ukuyalwa*/admonishing in which the newlywed is given the 'rules'/ 'the law' of that family is held when she arrives in the husband's home (Bongela, 2001). This aspect was covered in the introductory chapter under the discussion of *Family and marriage among the AmaXhosa*. Silence and enduring suffering are one of the virtues extolled as part of female nature during this session. The monitoring of the *mendi*'s behaviour is done by older *mendi* which could be the mother-in-law, or sister/s -in-law or other older *mendi* from the clan or village. This co-option of older women to help control younger women through a "normalizing gaze" is thus an elevation to a temporary status which nonetheless continues to be submissive and subordinate to men and is an example of how women seem to be cultural custodians and consequently act as agents of women's own subordination (Geisler, 2000; Kotze et al., 2012). This is also indicative of the existence of power between women themselves, not just between men and women. The *mendi* subject position thus positions the mourning woman as having to accept the cultural practice of 'visible' mourning, making it difficult for her to do as she wishes with reference to her mourning. This can be contrasted to the men who '*do as they please*'.

### ***Women as domestic providers and nurturers***

'Women as domestic providers and nurturers' derive from the familial-*ukwenda* discourse and entail positioning women as providers in the domestic sphere, and as nurturers of both husband and children (refer to extracts 49 and 51). This goes with division of labour in the family according to sex, which assumes women's

responsibility for domestic labour such as cooking, cleaning, doing laundry and child-rearing to be natural. The women were positioned thus by both men and women.

From extract 49, to be a wife and mother is regarded as women's principal role. Domesticity of women is tied to notions of femininity and masculinity. Parenthood is viewed as a cornerstone of domestic responsibility which is regarded as the woman's role, hence the invocation of '*he needs someone to look after the children*'. This understanding is based on essentialist notions of gender, which construct men and women as having essentially different characteristics and qualities which are viewed as inherent, natural, fixed and universal (Kaminer & Dixon, 1995), based on sexual differences. However, women are culturally constituted and socialized to be caring and nurturing rather than these being natural givens. The positioning facilitates the remarrying of men whereas women are discouraged from remarrying.

The 'women as natural carers' position has been disputed in literature that is opposed to women's portrayal as marginalised in politics and the economy (Cornwall, 2005). Cornwall (2005) argues against the public/private divide, citing that there are women in positions of power and leadership as economic agents, working 'outside the home' and inside it. Another 'subject position' emanating from 'familial-*ukwenda*' was 'men are heads' (*baziintloko*) and is discussed below.

### ***Men are heads ("baziintloko")***

In contrast to the positions of wife and mother which are often subject to male control, researchers indicate that among the AmaXhosa, heads of families are offered power and authority and they are highly esteemed as senior/s in the entire family (Bongela, 2001; Hirst, 2005). In accounting for the differential manner in which spousal mourning is practiced by men and women with respect to visibility, participants invoked male 'headship'. The following extracts are from a group discussion of what accounts for the differential treatment with regards to visibility.

Extract 56 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW 1:** We are made to respect [men]. There is no other reason. We don't sit on father-in-law's side, or clean his side of the house; you keep away ['ucweze']. This is emphasized.

Extract 57 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW6:** The focus in spousal mourning is on the females only. The males are ignored. It is an age old tradition this differential treatment of boys and girls. Men are just mere humans.

Extract 58 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW 5:** But they are heads.

Extract 59 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW 5:** They are mere heads with nothing important to show for it.

In the above extracts, the discourse of man's supremacy is invoked: *'they are heads'*. As *'heads'*, this subject position carries certain rights to speak and act and is thus imbued with agency. For example, heads are decision-makers and others submit to the headship. In contrast to the subjugated position of *mendi*, the dominant subject position of *'head'* brings with it the ability to exercise power and social control over those who are not heads. Those who are not heads are also expected to bestow respect to their heads as suggested in *'we are made to respect [men]'*. This also suggests that an imposition as they are *'made to respect'* [own emphasis].

The differential treatment of boys and girls that is referred to in extract 57 could thus be explained in terms of boys being future men and therefore prospective heads of families. Participants' defining 'men as heads' in their explanation shows their recognition of the connectedness of spousal mourning to socio-cultural status and power in society.

This 'headship' is problematized in extract 59. Traditionally, as head, the man generally provides for the needs of his family, and is responsible for the family member's education, health, discipline and general wellbeing and for this he is given full respect by his family (Bongela, 2001). However, over time the role of man as

provider has changed due to socioeconomic circumstances, for example, through retrenchments, unemployment and death. Women are sometimes providers or breadwinners thus making household headship to be subject to economic, political and social circumstances. This points to the fluidity of domestic arrangements even though that is generally not taken into consideration when '*the family decides*' (extract 51) about the woman's mourning. Extract 59 is an acknowledgement that it is merely by virtue of being male and nothing else that men are seen as 'superior'. It conveys that they are no different from women and therefore that women should also be accorded respect and as such is a contestation of the male headship. In other words, the power relations invoked by the head metaphor are baseless, thus bringing the headship status of man into question. The following section tackles another discourse used to explain the differential treatment of men and women in spousal mourning.

#### MALE SEXUAL DRIVE DISCOURSE

Sexuality is one of the areas in which gender inequality is manifested in society. As Foucault (1976) has shown, it is as a major site of power relations. The participants offered explanations of differential treatment in spousal mourning in terms of sexuality. In doing this, they drew on the 'male sexual drive discourse' (MSD) identified by Hollway (1984, 1989) in explaining why '*men do not mourn*'. This discourse holds a widespread view of sexuality as a biological drive that resides within each person. In addition, the 'male sexual drive discourse' depicts men and women as having different sexual urges: men are portrayed as having an intense desire for sex that is urgent and out of control, whilst women are regarded as more in control of their physical urges with either non-existent sexuality or one that is complementary to men's thus excluding the possibility that women may be desiring sexual subjects in their own right (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2000; Miles, 1992; Mulvey 1975; Shefer & Foster, 2001; Shefer & Ruiters, 1998; Weedon, 2003; Wood and Forster, 1995). In making sense of the lack of mourning by men, the women explained it as men are in need of frequent sexual relations and therefore unable to abstain according to the cultural norm, as reflected in the extract below.

Extract 60 (Elderly Urban Widow) I

**Elderly Urban Widow:** If men could mourn by wearing black, and be seen by all that they have lost a wife, well...it would be very difficult to wear the black suit every day for 6 months.

**Elderly Urban Widow:** He will not sleep at home because he is a man, he feels he cannot live without sex.

**R:** Please explain

**Elderly Urban Widow:** I said the man will sleep out even before you are buried. He feels he can't live without sex. Not all of them. They don't respect us. They are disrespectful whilst you are still alive. How much more when you are dead? He continues with his life ... We women are respectful.

The 'male sexual drive discourse', noticeable in '*he feels he cannot live without sex*', that the women draw on, renders mourning by clothes and behaviour by men problematic because the clothes must be respected by behaving appropriately. The 'male sexual drive' is also portrayed as urgent as reflected in '*the man will sleep out even before you are buried*', the implicit assumption being that he is at the mercy of his sexual desires compared to the female (Hollway, 1984; Shefer & Foster, 2001). Sexual intercourse is thus constructed as a male need, an activity intrinsic to masculinity.

Linked to the above is the traditional double standard of sexual morality, in which men are portrayed as less able to exercise self-control compared to women and are consequently encouraged to express their sexual impulses and take multiple partners (Miles, 1992; Wood & Forster, 1995). On the other hand, women are expected to set limits and are punished for being sexually active and labelled as promiscuous or loose (Miles, 1992). For example, as indicated in the previous chapter, if the widow is having sex, she is subjected to the shame of 'early release' from the clothes of mourning. Women's sexual agency is therefore subdued. The discourse thus has the effect of rendering abstinence very difficult for the man thereby legitimating their lack of mourning. In the following sections, subject positions provided by the MSD are discussed.

*Positioning of men as naturally requiring multiple partners*

Entailed in this male-only subject position is the cultural privileging of men in the area of sexuality whereby it is considered acceptable for married men to have multiple sexual partners. This aspect was covered in the introductory chapter under the subheading: *narratives of African belief and notions of (woman's) sexuality*.

Extract 61 (Younger Rural Widower) I

**Younger Rural Widower:** As a man you have other girlfriends in addition to the wife, but now when she dies you forget about the girlfriends for a while and concentrate on the matter at hand. So you are mourning for her. You do not rush because that would create the impression that you were already fed up with her.

R: Okay, I am hearing you say that you mourned for your wife in the sense that you did not take another wife for a year, and since her death you forsook the girlfriends which you previously had.

**Younger Rural Widower:** yes, I forsook the girlfriends because we men do not mourn by clothing.

In this extract the widower is explaining the form of mourning he adopted as that of abstaining from sexual relations. As previously pointed out, this is one of the expected mourning behaviours to show respect to the deceased spouse. In this extract the widower normalises the taking in of multiple sexual partners *in addition to the wife*. Because this is normalised, giving up sexual relations with girlfriends is constructed as respectful. Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012, p. 12) have identified the taking up multiple sexual partners by men as one of the features of “hegemonic masculinities”. Hegemonic masculinities is a notion of masculinity that deals with expected norms of masculine behaviour and also includes being violent and undertaking risky behaviours (Morrel, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). Those who do not conform to these norms may be marginalised as ‘not real men’, thus putting them under pressure to perform. The taking up of multiple sexual partners, violence and engaging in risky behaviours has been implicated as one of the contributing factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2001; Shefer & Foster, 2001; Strebel, 2000). A ‘respect-*hlonipha*’ discourse has been identified in the study and is taken up in the following section.

## RESPECT-‘HLONIPHA’ DISCOURSE

*Hlonipha* / respect is described by researchers and cultural commentators as a significant component of the indigenous culture of the AmaXhosa (Bongela, 2001; Mayer & Mayer, 1961/1974; Soga, 1937/1989). According to this cultural discourse, among the AmaXhosa and other Nguni and Sotho societies, respect is due to others on the basis of their age, gender and status (Bongela, 2001; Mayer & Mayer, 1961/1974; Soga, 1937/1989) and is therefore hierarchical. Accordingly, it calls for differential conduct whereby the younger respect the elderly and the women respect the men, heads of families, and communities, including chiefs and ancestors. Respect necessitates the avoidance of all forms of behaviour and utterances that could be deemed disrespectful. Various forms of showing respect (*ukuhlonipha*) encompass respect by clothing (use of a certain dress code), use of language and avoidance of certain names, spaces and behaviours (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Mayer & Mayer, 1961/1974; Rudwick & Shange, 2009; Soga, 1937/1989). For example, a married woman shows respect / *hlonipha* by always wearing a headscarf in the married home and by wearing long dresses (which originally had to cover the ankles). The younger generation, when talking to others older than themselves must use the prefixes *bhuti* / brother, *sisi* / sister, *mama* / mother, *tata* / father. A married woman is prohibited from using her father-in-law’s name or using any word that has any of the syllables in his name or surname. Furthermore, certain spaces in rural areas which are believed to be connected to ancestors, such as the cattle kraal and the area between the huts and the kraal (*inkundla*), are regarded as sacred territories of ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ and are consequently prohibited for married women (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Mayer & Mayer, 1961/1974; Rudwick & Shange, 2009; Soga, 1937/1989). *Hlonipha* is thus a significant traditional custom which shows respect for the marriage institution as well for the ancestors.

Failure to show respect usually results in punitive measures being taken against the person. This could be in the form of corporal punishment or *umdlivo* translated as fine. For example, in the case of a woman, the fine might involve baking bread or brewing homemade beer for the people who have been offended by the disrespectful behaviour or in the case of a man, he could be asked to buy liquor or be fined a sheep

or cow depending on the perceived severity of the offense. In the worst case scenario, the woman may be asked to go back to her home of origin to learn manners (*hlonipha*) because the violation of the expected code of behaviour is considered to be an indication of “bad breeding” (Mandela, 1993, p. 87). This process is referred to as *coniziswa* and she must bring back a goat as atonement for this offence (Soga, 1937/1989).

In part, therefore, the woman might be in fear of putting her family’s name in bad light and thus force herself to *hlonipha* / respect by engaging in the expected behaviours to maintain her family’s reputation. On the positive side, adherence by the married woman to these *hlonipha* / respect facets is rewarded by some measure of dignity/*isidima* and respectability in her married home; she may also be rewarded by ancestors, who are believed to be governing and controlling people’s lives and destinies (Bongela, 2001; Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008; Soga, 1937/1989). As Soga (1937/1989, p. 184) has put it, “*Hlonipha umzi wabantu uyakuhlonitshwa nawe lowo*”, which translates as “Respect your married home and you will also be respected”. Therefore the woman might also comply with the expected behaviours in order to earn this respect. This is in contrast to the man who is automatically granted respect, rather than earns it. In the context section, an outline of the behaviours expected of a dignified woman was outlined when discussing the *ukuyala* – admonishing session.

Whilst *hlonipha* applies to both men and women in terms of age and status, in practice, it is the married woman who bears the brunt of the practice. The practice is most restrictive to the women concerning their behaviour, dress code and what they are permitted to say, especially the married women compared to their male counterparts. An explanation for this is the “socially inferior status of females” (Herbert, 1990 in Rudwick & Shange, 2009, p. 68) . The following extracts reflect this genderedness of the practice.

Extract 62 (Younger Urban Male: YUM) FG

**YUM 3:** Mourning by clothes (visibility) was for others to see that if this man’s wife (widow) is respecting this much, he must be a real man. And in the past, since you

(the wife) have assumed this family name /surname, the ancestors must also be respected.

Extract 63 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW:** We are made to respect [men]. There is no other reason. We don't sit on father-in-law's side, or clean his side of the house, you keep away [ucweze]. This is emphasized.

In the respect-*hlonipha* discourse visibility emerged as one of the ways of showing respect by the widow as reflected in extract 62. Visibility was also linked to respect for ancestors and the deceased husband in the previous chapter (see extracts 12 and 13). Extracts 62 and 63 above indicate that in the *hlonipha*-respect discourse, the widow has the responsibility of maintaining the reputation of the in-law family, her own family, herself, her husband as well as the ancestors. This is a reflection of power inequality as respect is bestowed towards those who are superior. From the above extracts, one can see the connection of respect to masculinity from such comments as '*he must be a real man*' and to understandings of ancestors as central to the family's well-being (extract 62). The issue of women having to show respect as indicated in the above extracts can be contrasted with the extracts below, which highlight the lack of respect on the man's side not only when there is death, but also when he is still alive.

Extract 64 (Elderly Urban Widow) I

**Elderly Urban Widow:** I said the man will sleep out even before you are buried. He feels he can't live without sex. Not all of them. They don't respect us. They are disrespectful whilst you are still alive. How much more when you are dead? He continues with his life ... We women are respectful.

Extract 65 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**ERW:** What is clear is that men do not 'show respect' [group agrees]. He goes to your family's kraal. You are cautioned not to do that.

**ERW (all):** Yes, yho! ('Yho!' an exclamation conveying it is so unfair!)

The man's sleeping out before his wife is buried is disrespectful behaviour as alluded to in the text and is contrary to the culturally expected mourning behaviour. This is another clear indicator of unequal gender power relations, and man's privilege as he has capacity to exercise power and control, whereas the woman is '*made to respect*' thus indicating an imposition. The respect-*hlonipha* discourse thus represents women as not worthy of respect because mourning is a sign of respect. The section on 'postcolonial/critical feminist debates on mourning' in Chapter 3 dealt with the issue of persons whose lives are considered as "ungrievable" (Butler, 2004, p.32) / not worthy of respect. Soga (1989) and Zungu as cited in Rudwick and Shange (2009) argue that respect/*hlonipha* provides women with dignity and respect (by showing respect themselves) whereas this is guaranteed for men on the basis of their gender.

Both men and women used this discourse but for different ends. On the one hand, women used it as a form of resistance to gender relations whereby men were portrayed as glaringly disrespectful '*sleeping out even before you are buried*' whilst women were respectful, taking time to mourn. On the other hand, men used it to justify the differential treatment drawing on the woman's outsider status (assuming the family name of the man) and on the *AmaXhosa belief system* of ancestors. The discourse works by labelling any form of resistance by the woman as disrespectful and as 'bad breeding', thus coercing the woman to self-regulate in order to avoid bringing dishonour to their family of origin.

#### GENDERED RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

The gendered religious discourse in this context refers to the belief that men are superior due to Adam being a man and the first person to be created. Consequently, this discourse reinforces the hierarchical arrangement of families, with men as heads, followed by women and then children. The discourse is thus used to perpetuate unequal power relations with women expected to submit to men. In this sense then it articulates with both the familial-*ukwenda* and respect-*hlonipha* discourses.

Extract 66 (Elderly Urban Widow: EUW) I

**R:** Where is this thing coming from that women only should show respect and men should not show respect?

**Elderly Urban Widow:** Maybe God. That's how they are. God made us this way.

Based on this hierarchical arrangement respect is to be shown along the same lines, with respect due to the men by those lower on the hierarchy and children to show respect to their parents. Furthermore, women and children are socialized through the discourse to accept the status quo (Francis, 1997). In addition, women are regarded as more sinful than men due to the first woman, Eve, being influenced by the devil and later influencing the man. This is reflected in the positioning of women as '*Eve's descendants*' worthy of punishment as reflected in the extract 67. This evil influence by woman has been theorized as being passed down from generation to generation through childbirth.

### ***Women as Eve's descendants***

This was a women only subject position, whereby women, as Eve's descendents, were positioned as the cause of sin and as transmitters of sin. Some of the women positioned themselves as essentially sinful and worthy of punishment. They accepted mourning as their punishment owing to being Eve's descendents, thus drawing from a gendered religious discourse. The following emanates from a discussion around the enforcement of spousal mourning on women only even though the participants had indicated that it is Xhosa law.

Extract 67 (Elderly Rural Woman: ERW) FG

**R:** If it is Xhosa law, how come it does not apply equally to both men and women?

**ERW2:** Our forebears made it to be like that. Now I want to start preaching. The woman sinned at Eden. So she must also be tied down in isiXhosa custom as a form of punishment. Adam laid down the law. He is the head.

**ERW 3:** Yes. We arrived late at Eden and we did not listen, hence we are oppressed.

In this extract the participants' reference to Garden of Eden story suggests the influence of missionary Christianity imported into Africa by the colonialists. In this instance, it is linked to isiXhosa custom. This is an example of the mixing of Christian and African traditions as discussed in the 'colonialist infiltration and hybridity' in the context section of Chapter 1. The extract further provides a linkage

of the familial-*ukwenda* discourse with the gendered religious discourse with respect to the head position assigned to the male in relation to the sinful Eve position. This positioning was further alluded to by the key cultural informant, also a woman, when asked about why the bad luck of death or contamination is associated with the woman only.

Extract 68 (Key Cultural Informant: KCI) I

**R:** Now I do not understand why ‘umkhondo’ is associated with women only. Could you please explain where this is coming from?

**KCI:** ‘umkhondo’ of death and menstruation is associated with the woman because most death is associated with her. At Eden God gave punishment about death because of the woman.

**R:** Okay

**KCI:** So the woman is subjected to severe punishment because of the curse at Eden which is associated with the woman. I have no other explanation.

As explained earlier (context section), *umkhondo* refers to the ‘tracks of the person’. In extract 68, all women are considered to be polluted by death which came through Eve; they are thus worthy of punishment. The idea of original sin is used to justify an oppressive gendered custom. Furthermore, women are regarded as capable of contaminating others’ death, hence their isolation during mourning. The link of pollution to women’s sexuality was discussed in the introductory chapter.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to identify and analyse the discourses drawn on by the participants in their constructions of spousal mourning, as well as the subject positions made available by the discourses deployed. Common in all the discourses was the presence of power imbalances, which favoured men. This made it difficult for the women to practice egalitarian ways of mourning, hence the perpetuation of the practice of differential visibility in spite of the discontent expressed by women.

The ‘familial-*ukwenda*’ discourse rendered it difficult for the widow to make her own decisions pertaining to how to mourn as she is ‘married to the family’, which

decides on matters pertaining to her mourning. Although the family would release the man to remarry in order for the new wife to ‘take care of the children’, ultimately the positioning of the man as *head* of the family brought with it the authority to make his own decisions, even those that override the family’s wishes. Hence he could choose to mourn in whatever way, if at all. That is why some constructions for men were ‘*men do not mourn*’, or ‘*men mourn by heart*’. In other words, there was no room for equality between man and woman in this discourse. The ‘familial-*ukwenda*’ discourse was used to legitimate the differential practice of mourning.

The MSD also rationalised the differential treatment of men and women in spousal mourning, especially the non-visibility of men. AmaXhosa cultural beliefs regarding sexuality attach virility to a man who has multiple sexual partners, but the same is stigmatised for women. As a result, abstinence during mourning is considered to be a huge sacrifice, whilst lack thereof is not exactly frowned upon. However, for the woman who engages in sexual relations during mourning, socio-familial punitive measures were enforced. Visibility through the ‘clothes of mourning’ made it possible for her to be policed. So we see that ‘culture’ and ‘family’ work together in upholding the differential treatment and perpetuating the gender power imbalances.

The ‘respect-*hlonipha*’ discourse articulated with the ‘familial-*ukwenda*’. Central to both was the hierarchical arrangement of family, with men at the top of the hierarchy and therefore worthy of respect. Men emerged as culturally privileged to earn respect as per their gender (‘respect-*hlonipha*’ discourse) and as *heads* of families (‘familial-*ukwenda*’). On the other hand, as the ones constructed as ‘inferior’, the women had to show respect, and among some of the AmaXhosa, *something must signify respect*, in this case visibility. In addition, for the woman, strict cultural-familial punitive measures were taken for disrespectful behaviour, such as premature *khulula* mentioned in the previous chapter. The woman’s family of origin gets to know if the woman has been disrespectful as she would be returned to her home and only come back to her marriage home when the prescribed fine has been paid (Bongela, 2001; Sityana, 1990). This is a very serious deterrent for the women, thus they are ‘*made to respect*’, as reported by one of the participants

The gendered religious discourse establishes male superiority over females, thus entrenching unequal power relations between them. In this respect, it articulates well with the 'familial-*ukwenda*' and 'respect-*hlonipha*' discourses. The gendered religious discourse positions men as heads of their families and, therefore as worthy of respect. Hence the women mourn for the men and they do not have to mourn for the women. Women are positioned as 'responsible' for original sin (as Eve's descendants) and, therefore, pressurized into accepting punishment in the form of cultural practices that they view as oppressive, such as spousal mourning. All the identified discourses were thus permeated with power imbalances that were informed by the 'culture' of the AmaXhosa and enforced by the family.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

### INTRODUCTION

This study set out to examine *ukuzila* / spousal mourning among the AmaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. As indicated in the introduction, my interest in the research topic was sparked by the statement made by a male caller to a radio show. He indicated that “*Ungumfazi nje uza kuzila*”, meaning: “For as long as you are a woman you are going to mourn”. At the time I was oblivious to the gender differentials inherent in the practice as invoked by the speaker, and so started to read further. South African literature indicates a dearth of research on bereavement and spousal mourning in particular. A limited number of studies have addressed the socio-cultural factors implicated in spousal mourning, as well as the effect of these on the remaining spouse, especially the woman. However, none of them have addressed the gendered nature of the practice, particularly among the AmaXhosa. For the reasons outlined above, the goal of this research was to explore how the participants constructed *ukuzila* for men and for women.

By way of concluding this study, I revisit my original assumption that a spouse automatically mourns the death of her/his partner regardless of gender, and the questions that I sought to answer concerning *ukuzila* as outlined in the introduction and the methodology sections. In addition to exploring the constructions of *ukuzila* for men and women, the research examined how spousal mourning was constructed by the participants as a historical versus as a contemporary practice. This aspect is important because in poststructuralism, the theoretical lens drawn on in this study, phenomena are viewed as socially, culturally and historically contingent. Therefore, current constructions of spousal mourning are regarded as linked to people’s understandings of how it was practised in the past. This research was interested in exploring how current constructions of historical practices of spousal mourning might be employed to justify current constructions, and to identify any disjuncture. Furthermore, the research sought to explore resistance to these constructions which were saturated with cultural and gendered undertones, the discourses underlying the constructions, and the subject positions emanating from the discourses. The thesis

paid particular attention to the continuity of visibility for women, as well as justifications for this in spite of its branding by women as discriminatory in literature, and in the data, in the face of the extensive changes that have taken place. This is in contrast to the widower's visibility which has been largely discontinued. In this chapter, several conclusions concerning these issues are offered. The sections that follow provide: a summary of key findings regarding approaches to grieving and mourning in the literature, and the rationale for the approach I adopted in this study; different constructions of mourning by the participants; the gendered nature of visibility; men and mourning; issues of hybridity, multiplicity and locationality; and how visibility is maintained and resisted. I conclude this chapter by reflecting on the limits of this study and possibilities for further research.

#### APPROACHES TO GRIEVING AND MOURNING

The chapter on mourning covered a range of approaches to mourning. Various grief theories were examined, including psychoanalytic, stages/phases and task undertaking approaches; the underlying theme in these approaches is that of a clinical interest in an individually focused, intrapersonal process involving the severing of bonds with the deceased as the goal. Such grief theories have been lauded for their contribution to the analysis of grief as an emotional reaction and to understanding the emotional symptomatology in response to loss (Stroebe, Stroebe & Hansson, 2006). However, mainstream/standard understandings of mourning in Psychology have tended to marginalise context (including culture) in their theorising.

Taking into account the fact that cultures hold divergent views in their definition/s of death and the appropriate manner of grieving (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007), anthropological, cultural-psychological, research on mourning in Africa and in postcolonial settings as well as feminist research was then considered. These approaches focused on the culturally sanctioned ways of expressing grief in various contexts, such as communal grieving or collective mourning, continuing bonds, death related beliefs and practices and the gendered nature of these practices. Women emerged as the key targets of the rituals engaged in, for example, in customary signs of grieving, such as wearing of appropriate mourning clothing, and in being coerced to carry out the rituals (Manyedi et al., 2003). The rationale provided for this

differential treatment was women's sexuality which was considered as polluting in certain 'times of womanhood' which are exacerbated by death. Another common thread among these approaches was the focus on the outward expression of mourning, namely, visibility, its mediation by culture and the consequences thereof.

The chapter on mourning also addressed *ukuzila* as the type of mourning exercised by the AmaXhosa. *Ukuzila* encompasses both showing respect to the deceased and engaging in rituals employed in getting rid of the contamination that is believed to be brought about by death. Both literature and the participants in this study alluded to this understanding. However, based on the AmaXhosa belief system concerning issues of (women's) sexuality, the woman is considered to be the most polluted by death and, therefore, the most contagious (Magudu, 2004; Manyedi et al., 2003; Pauw, 1990; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007). Consequently, *ukuzila* is characterised by gender differentials whereby the widow undergoes stricter measures with respect to the cleansing rituals, whilst the widower is quickly discharged from such restrictions. Gender differentials regarding *ukuzila* were also invoked by the participants in the study.

While *ukuzila* and other approaches to grieving and mourning incorporate culturally sanctioned ways of expressing grief in various contexts, thus transcending the intrapersonal, it is equally important to be careful in how culture is utilised in these studies. Some of these studies have treated culture as a discrete and static entity imbued with power to make things happen. In addition, they have treated the culture of the specific people under study as homogeneous. This lack of a nuanced understanding of culture has masked the particularities and complexities of culture brought about by its intersection with issues of gender, religion, age, sexual orientation and race. Critical feminist debates on mourning contest this short coming.

### ***Postcolonial and critical feminist debates on mourning***

Research in postcolonial settings and feminist research took into consideration the complexities of culture, and how culture may be appropriated and invoked by people at certain times in order to achieve certain ends. This research highlighted the power relations inherent in the cultural practice of spousal mourning and how culture is

employed in the marginalisation and stigmatisation of widows by the cultural practices related to mourning. In this way, the gendering of the practice was problematized.

This study adopted postcolonial feminism utilising poststructuralism within a Cultural Psychology approach. This approach allows for the theorising of concepts such as hybridity, diversity, fluidity, multiplicity, specificity and power which are pertinent in postcolonial settings, as well as visibility, which as indicated, is of interest in this study. Postcolonial feminism's agenda is to insert women's concerns at the centre in postcolonial settings. Postcolonialism had marginalised women due to its male-centredness, an aspect addressed in Theoretical Framework chapter. Postcolonial feminism pays special attention to power relations and recognises the complexities of being a woman in postcolonial settings. This entails taking into account the intersection of culture with local specificities, a concern it shares with Cultural Psychology. In this research, postcolonial feminism was employed to shed light on the complexities around *ukuzila* informed by the location and multiple subject positions of the participants.

This study also utilised poststructuralism, incorporating Foucault. Poststructuralism, Foucault and postcolonial feminism all share the same theoretical concern of exposing and challenging systems of domination and undermining practices and representations that validate points of subordination (Macleod, 2008). They all pay attention to the workings of power. Poststructuralism offers a useful and dynamic framework whereby power relations in society are explored, analyzed and critiqued with the view to the possibility for social change (Weedon, 1997). Poststructuralism highlights issues of heterogeneity, social and historical contingency which are useful to the agenda of postcolonial feminism. This research draws on these poststructural understandings.

Foucault's work on power, visibility, surveillance and resistance was invaluable in this study. This study utilised Foucault's notion of disciplinary power, in which power is invisible, whilst its subjects are exposed to constant visibility (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). The power of visibility lies in its ability to evoke self-monitoring since those who are made visible assume constant surveillance. They thus come to

act as if they are being watched, whether or not they are being watched. The participants in favour of visibility were of the view that '*clothes would help*' (read visibility) by encouraging the widow to behave according to mourning norms since they would be monitored more closely by others; thus they watch their own steps, as it were, to avoid being accused of '*having had a hand in your husband's death*'. Foucault's work on power puts emphasis on the possibility of resistance, as cited in his assertion that resistance is inscribed as an "underside" or "irreducible opposite" in all power relations (Foucault, 1978, p. 96). In this research, forms of resistance to the gender differentials in spousal mourning incorporated both verbal resistance and actions of resistance.

#### DISCOURSE ANALYTIC METHODOLOGY

This research employed thematic analysis and a discourse analytic methodology to analyze text emanating from the discussions of spousal mourning. Discourse analysis allows for nuanced analysis of local processes with respect to understanding meanings and discourses attached to phenomena. It thus shares common ground with the theoretical stance of postcolonial feminism and poststructuralism. Furthermore, it seeks to expose power relations at work in discourses embedded in constructions of phenomena and their social and political effects (Parker, 2005). Discourse analysis was used to analyze the power relations inherent in constructions of spousal mourning. Thematic analysis was used to shed light on the constructions of *ukuzila* for men and women, both past and current, in order to address the first two research questions. The identified themes were then used as the basis for performing discourse analysis, using Parker's (1992 & 2005) criteria for analyzing discourse.

Data for analysis were generated through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with widows and widowers, an interview with a key cultural informant and focus group discussions, thereby employing a type of triangulation. The participants were from rural and urban areas and included, in separate groups, younger and elderly women and men from each setting. Both focus group discussions and interviews were held in isiXhosa as the researcher and all the participants were isiXhosa speakers. The focus group discussions which explored the social and cultural meanings, knowledge and discourses attached to *ukuzila* were facilitated by means of vignettes. The following section reports on the various constructions of spousal mourning that emanated from

the thematic analysis of data collected from the focus group discussions and the interviews.

#### VARIOUS CONSTRUCTIONS OF SPOUSAL MOURNING

Mourning in general and *ukuzila* in particular were understood in the literature and in the data as a sign of showing respect to the dead, incorporating both the deceased and ‘the living dead’, that is, the ancestors. With reference to the subject of *ukuzila* in general, the study enriched understandings of *ukuzila* by bringing into focus its complex, multifaceted, gendered and highly contested nature. It also underscored its contingency on historical and cultural contexts and other points of location, such as the township versus the rural areas. Whilst there was consensus (mostly) about *ukuzila* as paying one’s last respects to the deceased, controversy ensued concerning how the showing of respect was to be expressed and how it is currently practised. Central to how showing respect was to be conveyed were power relations centred on gender, with women viewed as under obligation to show respect by some, whilst men “*do as they please*”. Both positions were, however, strongly contested.

Multiple and contradictory accounts concerning *ukuzila* centred their attention on visibility as “*something must show*” that one is in mourning. On the one hand, some held the view that wearing special ‘clothes of mourning’ (visibility) be obligatory for mourners and should be continued. On the other, showing respect by adhering to culturally normative behaviour for widows/widowers was regarded as sufficient because “*mourning is not what you wear*”. Culturally normative behaviour for widows and widowers included abstinence, speaking in hushed tones, restricting one’s movement, refraining from visiting places of entertainment and from drinking alcoholic beverages. However, in practice, these behaviours were more evident in women’s mourning, as supported by the statement, “*we women mourn the most*”, whereas widowers were at liberty to “*carry on with their lives*”. The issue of widowers carrying on with their lives was also echoed in literature across various contexts (Danforth, 1982; Kotze et al., 2012; Lamb, 2000; Sossou, 2002) and was one of the contested issues related to spousal mourning.

For the woman, failure to adhere to the culturally normative mourning behaviours resulted in being considered as not having mourned and as *'just wearing'*. Consequently, *khulula* was applied, whereby the person's clothes were removed before the official termination of the mourning period. This point illustrates the contradiction concerning who has mourned and who has not mourned and is *'just wearing'*. Other participants advocated what they termed *'mourning by heart'*, whereby it could be inferred from one's behaviour that one was in mourning; others insisted that *'mourning by heart'* need not be inferred from one's behaviour at all. Overall, visibility of *ukuzila* was spoken of as mainly the woman's obligation, whilst constructions of men's *ukuzila* included utterances such as *"men do not mourn by clothing"*, thus pointing to the gendered nature of visibility.

#### THE GENDERED NATURE OF VISIBILITY

Pertaining to the investigation of the constructions of spousal mourning, the issue of visibility through a specific dress code emerged as critical. Many arguments and justifications for the continued visibility of widows were put forward by both male and female participants. There was an appeal to protection of the widow from predatory men who might seek a relationship with her in view of her inheritance, and criminals who might have their eyes on the inheritance. There was also an appeal to AmaXhosa cosmology in the form of ancestors who are to be respected, especially by women (inferior in the hierarchical family structure of the AmaXhosa and, therefore, their *'hlonipha'*-respect hierarchy). In both the appeal to protection of the widow and the appeal to the AmaXhosa cosmology, men and women were located in subject positions that perpetuate the existing gender differentials: men were portrayed as predators who "approach" widows who are not *'wearing'*, thereby constructing a picture of men's sexuality as "positively sexual" (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 375), whilst women were portrayed as *'targets'*, thus painting a picture of passive female sexuality.

Further justification included: assertions that visibility would make it possible for others to see that a person is bereaved and consequently behave in an appropriate manner towards the mourner; and the protection of the community from contamination with bad luck brought about by death. If a woman did not *'mourn by*

clothes', that is, mourn visibly by wearing a specific dress code for mourners, she could be stigmatised as '*having had a hand in the husband's death*'. These justifications for visibility further formed the basis for regulation of their movement, sexuality and behaviour. For example, because of the possibility of contaminating others with bad luck, they have to restrict their movement and keep away from places of entertainment. They are also restricted from having sexual relations during the mourning period.

Visibility of married women turned out to be a regulatory mechanism which allowed their surveillance instituted from the day they got married (see introductory chapter), to be continued after the man's death, until the woman died, thus subjecting the married woman to a permanent "field of visibility" (Foucault, 1982, p. 221). The surveillance of married women and widows is two-fold. One involves surveillance by others. For example, married women's sexuality is policed through the specific dress code required of them, namely, a long dress which must cover the ankles, a waist band, a head scarf and a blanket and designed to ensure that they were marked as sexually belonging exclusively to their husbands (Gcingca-Ndolo, 2008). Visibly marking the married woman enables others to keep track of her movements and behaviour to see if they are in line with the cultural norms governing married women's proper deportment. The same principle applied in the context of spousal mourning, whereby the constant visibility of the widow made possible by the clothes of mourning enabled surveillance by others. Others would be aware of her mourner status and monitor her conduct to see if it adhered to culturally normative mourning behaviour.

By being '*visible and different*', the married woman and widow are made conscious of being watched. As a result, pressure was put on them to practice self-surveillance and conduct themselves according to normative mourning or married woman behaviour. The visible subject (widow) thus "becomes increasingly active in disciplining themselves', thereby freely subjecting the self to scrutiny, "Inscribing in themselves a power relation" (Dreyfus, 1982, p. 192). There is, therefore, an element of power linked to visibility as the wearer exercises power on herself, by engaging in self-monitoring to ensure proper mourning behaviour, thus internalising social control. The constant visibility of the woman throughout her married life, including

widowhood, was embedded in gendered cultural discursive practices of *hlonipha*-respect and familial-*ukwenda* which sustain it.

The introductory part of the study brought to the fore the aspect of widow visibility in other cultures, as well as its gendered discriminatory nature. It also highlighted the eventual disappearance of visibility as a sign of mourning in some cultures, whereas for other cultural groups, such as the AmaXhosa, it has continued, this in spite of the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic transformations that have taken place.

#### THE UNGRIEVABLE LIFE: MEN AND MOURNING

The statement *Ungumfazi nje uza kuzila* /“For as long as you are a woman you are going to mourn” implies obligatory mourning by women and acceptance of lack of mourning by men. The lack of mourning by men implied in the statement was echoed by both male and female participants in the study. It referred to the fact that compared to the widows, widowers were not marked as having lost their spouse through a specific dress code, and did not adhere to culturally normative mourning behaviour outlined in the section titled ‘*various constructions of spousal mourning*’ above. ‘Men not grieving’ can be inferred from the numerous references in the study to widowed men who left their homesteads *the same day the wife is taken to the mortuary*, which is contrary to culturally sanctioned mourning behaviour.

The constant allusion to men not grieving reflects not only on men’s behaviour, but the women who have died. Women referred repeatedly to the lack of respect that this suggested. This links to the question of whose lives are seen as worthy of mourning. In essence, the gendered relations evident in various representations of spousal mourning render women’s lives as “ungrievable” or not worthy to be mourned (Butler, 2004, p. 32).

Postcolonial understandings of mourning have linked who is mourned with grievable to power relations. Athanasiou (2005), Butler (2004), Kotze et al. (2012) and Stanley (2002) have highlighted the lack of mourning for marginalised people in society and have advocated for public display of mourning for them as an act of activism. The

linkage of power relations to who is mourned or grievable was raised by the female participants in the study, who stated that if they were in power they would also be mourned. The question of who is made visible by publicly displaying their mourning is linked thus to gendered power relations.

#### HYBRIDITY, MULTIPLICITY AND LOCATIONALITY

The theoretical framework chapter, drawing from the work of different postcolonial and poststructuralist scholars, explored various concepts that could be employed in making sense of spousal mourning. As a theoretical resource, poststructuralism views cultural practices as socially and historically contingent. The introductory chapter covered the specificities of the Eastern Cape context of the study as well as that of the AmaXhosa. The findings of the study indicated that the influence of colonialist infiltration and the current influence of globalization on the socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic context of the AmaXhosa had implications for spousal mourning. For example, hybridised ways of mourning, whereby traditional mourning practices were mixed with western practices resulted in new complex practices such as a more celebratory form of mourning, and lavish funerals accompanied by ‘*after tears*’ parties. The question of ‘*after tears*’ has also been noted by researchers in other black South African communities such as amongst the AmaZulu (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007) and Northern Sotho (Kotze et al., 2012). Hybridity was also noticeable in the form taken by the ‘clothes of mourning’. Hybridity was reflected in the dress code as indicated by the movement away from wearing the ‘clothes of mourning’ inside out, to wearing black (a colonialist imposition), and later on when colours linked to church uniforms were adopted. In some cases the ‘German print’ cloth has been accepted as an appropriate mourning attire or any colour of choice. The different ‘clothes of mourning’ thus indicated the multiplicity of ways in which the practice of *ukuzila* is carried out.

Cultural psychology, the view of culture adopted in this research considers issues of contingency, multiplicity, hybridity and specificity, which are all relevant in this study. For example, the AmaXhosa are not regarded as a homogeneous group, but one that is divergent along such lines as age, gender, rural-urban divide, religion and socio-economic status. On account of the socio-historical contingency of cultural

practices, findings indicated that the AmaXhosa as an ethnic group, and women, as a category, held divergent constructions of spousal mourning, especially around the issue of visibility by the remaining spouse. Both men and women held differing views on this aspect as has been dealt with above under the section ‘various constructions of spousal mourning’.

A further point of divergence was around the African belief system. Socio-cultural influences on spousal mourning have been linked to the African belief system whereby ancestors are regarded as part of the cosmology of Africans and the AmaXhosa both in literature (Bongela, 2001; Manyedi et al., 2003) and in the data. However, not all AmaXhosa ascribe to the African belief system, thus resulting in diversity, with some retaining the belief system and ways of mourning informed by it, and others mixing the African way and the (post)colonial ways, resulting in hybridity as explained in the previous paragraph.

In addition to the controversy around visibility, and the ‘African belief system’, transformations in the socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic landscape brought about changes pertaining to the mourning period. Socio-economic considerations such as taking into account the worker status of the woman have resulted in their mourning period being reduced, and the adoption of various forms of visibility, for example, taking as little as two weeks in mourning (leave days) and wearing a certain colour or required uniform (work clothes) or European clothes (Parkard, 2009) instead of the normative clothes of mourning when going to the ‘*white man’s place*’. Additional contingent factors included one’s belief system or religion and whether one resided in a rural or urban setting. Rural locations, which are viewed as the seat of cultural custodians, were perceived to be less tolerant of lack of visibility in mourning, which as indicated, was considered to be the culturally acceptable way of mourning. In spite of all the changes the women remained marked.

#### GENDERED POWER AND DISCOURSE: THE MAINTENANCE OF VISIBILITY

The consistent gendered visibility of the widow was shaped by the discourses of respect-*hlonipha*, familial-*ukwenda*, MSD, and a gendered religious discourse. In brief, the respect-*hlonipha* discourse is a gendered cultural discourse, in which respect

is granted on the basis of one's age, gender and status. As a result, the younger respect the elderly, women respect men, and a chief is respected by all. The use of a special dress code is one of several ways of showing respect; hence, in the context of spousal mourning, visibility is underscored.

The familial-*ukwenda* discourse is based on the notion that the woman among AmaXhosa is “married to the household” / *wendela emzini*, that is, the nuclear family and wider extended family, including the clan (Gcingca-Ndolo, p. 109, 2008). Owing to the hierarchical family structure of the AmaXhosa, the woman married to the household assumes an inferior position in relation to her husband, and all males and women born in her husband's family. As a result, she has to show respect, among other behaviours expected of her. In the context of spousal mourning, this encompasses mourning visibly. In addition, ‘*the family decides*’ concerning how she is going to proceed with her mourning. This can be contrasted to the man, who ‘*does as he wishes*’ in line with his superior status in the family hierarchy.

The MSD maintains that men and women have different sexual urges, with men's sexual urges portrayed as intense and uncontrollable, whereas women's are depicted as more in control of theirs (Hollway, 1984, 1989). In the context of spousal mourning, the MSD renders the culturally normative mourning behaviour of abstinence difficult, as reflected in ‘*he feels he cannot live without sex*’. With respect to visibility, MSD makes mourning by clothes and behaviour problematic because the mourner must show respect to the ‘*clothes of mourning*’ by behaving appropriately. This discourse thus has the effect of justifying men's lack of mourning.

The gendered religious discourse refers to the belief in the superiority of men over women owing to Adam being the first man to be created. As a result, the gendered religious discourse upholds the hierarchical structure of families wherein men are ‘*heads*’, followed by women and then children. As ‘*heads*’, men are to be respected, and mourning visibly is one way of women showing this respect. Furthermore, in this discourse, humankind's fall is attributed to the woman, who must suffer the consequences. The participants drew on this discourse to justify the differential treatment of widows and widowers.

The identified discourses supported and articulated with each other. For example, the familial–*ukwenda* discourse is characterised by gendered power relations, in which the married woman /*mendi* is positioned as inferior to her husband (the *head* of the family), all males and women born in the family. Similarly, the gendered religious discourse positions women as inferior to men, who are positioned as heads of their families and as worthy of respect. As someone who is considered as ‘inferior’, the widow is marginalized and faces certain impositions on her, including being ‘*made to mourn*’. Mandatory mourning by women and the apparent acceptance of lack of mourning by men as suggested by the caller is reflective of an imposition of visibility on the part of *mendi*. However, the man, in line with his *head* subject position is free to ‘*do as he pleases*’ with respect to mourning, thus indicating his possible exclusion from mourning.

The location of men and women in the subject positions of *head* and *mendi* respectively perpetuates the existing gender differentials. Pressure to accept the call to the subject position of *mendi* is suggested in statements such as “*Hlonipha umzi wabantu uyakuhlonitshwa nawe lowo*”, which translates as “Respect your married home and you will also be respected” (Soga, 1937/1989, p. 184) and make it difficult for the married woman to resist public display of mourning. In addition, conforming by way of public display of mourning earns one’s family reputation a good name, as failure to conform is attributed to “bad breeding” (Mandela, 1993, p. 87). The married woman is likely to succumb to the culturally sanctioned way of showing *ukuzila* by visibility in order to protect their own family’s reputation. The ‘culture’ and ‘family’ alliance thus emerged as a major contributing factor to the continuity of visibility. In the above discussion, the articulation of the familial-*ukwenda* with the respect-*hlonipha* discourse in the context of the family and their involvement in the perpetuation of gender differentials in spousal mourning is apparent.

In the MSD, men were positioned as naturally requiring multiple partners. The MSD and the subject positions it offers for men and women are thus reflective of the cultural privileging of men. This is because men are allowed to take on multiple sexual partners, and this behaviour is regarded as a sign of virility and something to be aspired to as indicated in the introduction under ‘socio-cultural context’. The ‘family’ is also implicated in this because polygamy/multiple partners might be

accepted as one's cultural privilege. The MSD thus perpetuates already existing gender differentials by facilitating non-visibility for men. Justifications for continuing widow visibility were upheld by the identified discourses of MSD, familial-*ukwenda* and respect-*hlonipha*. Both culture and the family emerged as powerful in upholding the differential constructions as demonstrated in the previous sections, and the family as governor of custom regulation. All of the discourses invoked culture as if it is a bounded entity when dealing with women, and differently with men. The family echoes this by enforcing the cultural norms where women are concerned whilst men operate in cultural freedom, thus maintaining the broader relations of power. The maintenance of visibility was met with resistance from some of the participants.

## RESISTANCE

Resistance to visibility took on two forms, namely, verbal expressions of resistance as well as actions. The expressions of resistance indicated the women's awareness of customs being oppressive of women. Verbal expressions included statements such as '*If women were in power...*', men would mourn visibly and also spend the same amount of time in mourning as currently spent by the woman. They also consisted of reference to women as '*made to mourn*' through the special 'clothes of mourning'. The women thus recognised the gendered power differentials inherent in the practice.

Actions of resistance included widows keeping away from the rural homestead, considered a cultural space, and therefore inhabited by ancestors, in order to avoid the culturally acceptable way of 'mourning by clothes'. Others subverted the whole purpose of visibility by wearing the 'clothes of mourning' and then engaging in culturally inappropriate behaviour for someone in mourning, such as taking on a lover. Mate (2013) has documented how some widows in Zimbabwe would take on a lover even though they were expected to be celibate for life or remarry if they wanted to have sexual relations. Widows who took on lovers were labelled as "giving widowhood a bad name" (Mate, 2013, p. 20).

## CHAINS OF EQUIVALENCE/INTERSECTING RELATIONS OF COMMONALITY

The findings in this study, with respect to gendered power relations regarding mourning as a practice that is deemed oppressive and discriminatory are not exclusive to this study. This research has found resonance with Kotze et al.'s (2012) study involving a group of AmaZulu, AmaXhosa, Tswana, Southern and Northern Sotho women in which the oppressive nature of the mourning practices was questioned. These similarities point to the presence of chains of equivalence in the area of spousal mourning concerning its gendered oppression. Chains of equivalence refers to intersecting relations of commonality due to patriarchal hierarchy in spite of the various diversities brought about by local contexts such as racial hierarchy, religious affiliation, cultural affiliation or sexual orientation.

In view of the diverse forms in which women experience gendered oppression across contexts, scholars have called for commonalities to be highlighted whilst negotiating alliances rather than attempting to form unity around women as an oppressed category. In view of that, Macleod (2006, p. 379) asserts that “women cease to be a coherent group, but are linked in a chain of equivalence that articulates political issues related not only to gender” but also to the various axes of differentiation pointed out in the theoretical framework chapter. To highlight the global commonalities of women, Mohanty (1999) investigated two occasions involving the integration of women lace makers of Narsapur, in India, and women in the electronics industry in California, in the United States into the global economy. Mohanty's (1999) work shows that in spite of the geographical and socio-cultural divide between these women, particular gendered readings based on local and transnational patriarchal and racial hierarchies allow for these women workers to be positioned in very similar ways. The chain of equivalence in this case is centred on women's identity as wage labourers being constructed as secondary to their familial and domestic roles (Mohanty, 1999, cited in Macleod, 2008).

In terms of the findings in this study, chains of equivalence, whereby gender and mourning practices have been highlighted as oppressive outside of South Africa include Lamb (2000) in India, Maposa (2012) in Zimbabwe and Sossou (2002) in

West Africa. Lamb (2000) underlined the gendered nature of mourning practices in India, highlighting how these were used to control women's sexuality. Maposa (2012) focused on gender and mourning attire, highlighting how mourning attire is used as a control mechanism, with men wearing ordinary clothes whilst women are made visible through a specific dress code. Sossou (2002) drew attention to gender inequality in mourning practices which resulted in the victimization of widows in the Western African countries of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria.

These chains of equivalence can be used to establish feminist solidarity and as multiple points of resistance against the multiple forms of inequality and domination faced by women globally. In the following section, attention is drawn on some limitations pertaining to the study.

## LIMITATIONS

As indicated in the respect *hlonipha*-respect discourse, respect is due to others on the basis of their age, gender and status (Bongela, 2001). The AmaXhosa cultural value of *hlonipha* (respect) requires the younger to respect the older in their social interaction; likewise, men are given their due respect. With reference to the focus group discussions and the interviews in this study, this was a limitation in terms of my interaction with elderly rural men and women and elderly urban men and women. According to isiXhosa norms, it is rude to ask probing questions after an initial question has been answered as it conveys that you doubt the integrity of the person and the truthfulness of their response. In the elderly rural men's focus group, when I was asking questions around the assertion that men do not put on 'clothes of mourning', one of the participants responded by pointing out that men and women are different. I tried several times to probe further but did not get a different response other than that men and women will always be different, and that is why from an early age girls wear school tunics and boys wear school blazers. I had to back off my line of questioning, as probing for the 'obvious' would be understood as disrespectful and 'accept' that men and women mourn differently because they are different.

The *hlonipha* cultural value also requires that death be talked about in roundabout ways, using metaphors. For example, in the discussions the participants did not use

the word 'dead', but referred to the person who was sleeping for the rest of their lives or who has 'left us'. Talking in roundabout ways also applies in relation to sexuality issues. For example, I felt limited when I wanted to probe deeply around '*utata akazili*'/the man does not mourn, linked to the MSD, whereby men were alleged not to abide by the culturally normative behaviour of sexual abstinence, especially with respect to the elderly men. Owing to my cultural knowledge of the discourse, I felt that it might be embarrassing for them to be pressed to elaborate on sexual matters.

This research was conducted among the AmaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. The heterogeneous nature of the AmaXhosa has been acknowledged in the introductory chapter. Although the research was carried out among the AmaXhosa in the Eastern Cape, the specific region that was covered was the one formerly demarcated as the homeland of Ciskei (to invoke apartheid boundaries); the East London area, and the area in and surrounding King Williams Town. Research results incorporating all the regions that make up the Eastern Cape might yield somewhat different results due to contextual factors.

My personal investment in the study was acknowledged in the section on reflexivity. In qualitative research, the researcher is recognized as an integral part of the research process. As a married Xhosa woman, my location unquestionably informed the collection of data in terms of the questions posed, the interpretation and analysis of data. In line with the theoretical framework adopted in this study, which foregrounds people's particularities, the research might yield different results if conducted by someone from a different context.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

This research brought to the fore the gendered nature of *ukuzila* upheld by a largely patriarchal culture and a family structure that is supportive of the patriarchal culture. The continued visibility of women's mourning was identified as a contentious issue which was regarded as discriminatory, unfair, a yoke, as imprisonment, and as punishment. In light of this finding, further research might include exploring people's willingness to change to a non-gendered practice of *ukuzila*. The same categories of participants as outlined in Chapter 5 could be used but with the research questions

focusing on exploring their openness to a new form of *ukuzila* that is without gender bias.

This research used focus group discussions and interviews to collect data. Doing an ethnographic study in *ukuzila* might yield additional rich material. However, the difficulty of access to something that is as sensitive as *ukuzila* would need to be considered and careful ethical principles put in place.

Furthermore, as a way of engaging the community, intervention research could include discussions which facilitate awareness around the discriminatory nature of the practice, and discussions of a way forward into non-gendered *ukuzila*. These discussions could be held in community radio stations and in community forums that discuss pertinent cultural issues.

Further research could do an exploratory study on widows and widowers from same-sex marriages. In light of the relatively new openness about same sex marriages, their legalization, and the patriarchal nature of the AmaXhosa culture, such a study would be desirable. This research might consider if these couples would expect their spouses to mourn for them and how they would expect to be mourned in light of the heteronormative nature of *ukuzila*.

#### CONCLUDING COMMENT

*Ukuzila* emerged as a practice to which multiple and contradictory meanings are attached although in reality its meaning is taken for granted. The multiple and contradictory meanings brought about by issues contingent to the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural context of the AmaXhosa resulted in complexities in this practice. These factors, therefore, need to be taken into account in discussions around the practice, as well as in how it is carried out.

*Ukuzila* also emerged as a practice put in place to show respect to the deceased. However, the showing of respect revealed a gendered cultural practice. Men were the automatic recipients of this respect, whilst women had to earn it. As a way forward, showing mutual respect should be given serious consideration, especially in light of

the discriminatory nature of *ukuzila*, and the current political climate that is against all forms of discrimination as enshrined in the constitution.

Linked to the construction of *ukuzila* as showing respect was visibility, which was highly gendered, targeting the woman from the moment she got married as per cultural norms. The woman was marked throughout her married life and beyond, that is, further marked after the husband's death. Visibility was made out to be the authentic form of mourning for the woman. Furthermore, visibility was linked to family and marriage practices, supported by the three interlocking discourses of familial-*ukwenda*, respect-*hlonipha* and the MSD. These discourses were entrenched in the largely patriarchal (Mtuze, 1991) 'culture' of the AmaXhosa (patriarchy interlocking with culture), articulated with each other and sustained visibility.

The collectivistic and patriarchal nature of the AmaXhosa culture made it very difficult for the women to negotiate agentic decisions that run counter to the cultural norms and expectations concerning *ukuzila*. This aspect was further complicated by the inclusion of ancestors in the community of the AmaXhosa. The ancestors, who are male, are to be revered by holding onto the cultural practices. Gender was thus used, once again, to control women, with *ukuzila*/spousal mourning as a site of reproduction of gendered and cultural power imbalances as evidenced by the continuing visibility of the widow. The centrality of the family as understood by the AmaXhosa, which has historically been a bastion against racism, and some ills of colonialism, makes it difficult for the woman to resist, for how can one be against the wishes of the family?

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## FOOTNOTES

[1] Diaspora and cultural hybridity; diaspora is associated with the movement of people' e.g. from Africa to Europe and the United States/ East to the West. Therefore, it is linked to location issues and cultural hybridity refers to the cross fertilization of cultures or the moulding each other of cultures as a result of the movement or migration of diasporas.

[2] Conceptual repertoire in this sense is related to the notion of discourse as it refers to particular ways of describing or representing ourselves and others. For example, a person may be described as 'feminine' or 'old' and once described, that person has certain rights and responsibilities to fulfil as well as limitations concerning what they can or cannot do.

[3] Township in South Africa is a suburb where mainly black people live. This arrangement is a legacy of apartheid legislation as black people were not allowed to stay in towns or cities.

## APPENDIX 1: CONSENT FORM

### AGREEMENT BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in the research which is being conducted by Hlonelwa Ngqangweni on the topic of *ukuzila* / spousal mourning.

I understand that this research is being conducted as part of the requirements for a PhD degree at Rhodes University. The recorded focus group discussions / interview will be used for the purposes of this research. I understand that these will be turned into written text and used for analysis purposes. Some of these texts will be reproduced word for word in the PhD thesis or some other academic exercise. In all of these instances my identity will be kept confidential so that I cannot be identified by using a pseudonym instead of my real name.

I further understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. If I choose to withdraw from the study I can request that the data I have provided up until that point be not included in the study. I can talk to Hlonelwa about any concerns I might have about my participation in this study at any time.

Date signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE

**General statement by interviewer:** I am interested in your experience of spousal mourning as well as your take on how it has practised and how it has been practised.

- Did you mourn for your wife (if widower)/husband (if widow)?
- Please tell me how you mourned for her (if widower)/ /him (if widow).
- Please describe for me how spousal mourning is practised by AmaXhosa.
- Could you please tell me how it has been practised historically?
- There has been an outcry in some groups that “Men do not mourn”. What is your take on this?
- Some people seem to differentiate between ‘mourning by clothes’ and mourning by heart’ and behaviour. What is your take on this?
- To you, which is more important and why?
- Is there anything concerning *ukuzila* / spousal mourning that I have not covered and which you think is important?
- Thank you for your participation!