Inkcitha nzila nobomi obutsha (The release of the widow and life after mourning): Xhosa widows and citizenship

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

at

Rhodes University

by

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MARCH 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Let me begin by acknowledging God, and the prayers of my mothers. Iinyembezi zethu aziweli phantsi because God is always faithful.

To those who walk with me, and who continue to shine light unto my path; kuni oSthathu, Ndebe, Chisana, Khophoyi, oNkomo'ezibomvu! Nakuni Nozulu, Mpafana, Kheswa, oMchumane! Camagu.

To my supervisors, Dr Siphokazi Magadla and Dr Shingirai Mtero; thank you for your guidance throughout this journey. For affirming my thoughts and pushing me to think deeper, in constant pursuit of rigorous feminist scholarship. You make me brave. To have worked with you both, has been the greatest honour. Ndiyabulela kakhulu.

To oMama noMakhulu who took part in this study; ndiyabulela ngokundi vulela amakhaya wenu, nokundithemba ngamabali wenu. I hope I have captured your stories in the ways that you would have. uThixo anandisele apho nithatha khona.

To the inspiration behind this study, my mother, Nomvuyiseko Jimlongo; we did it! To my aunt, Nompinda Qakala; and many others in my family; enkosi ngenkxaso yenu.

To my flatmate, Nangamso Myoli; you have held me up without even realising it. Thank you for the warmth, and the laughter.

To Simamkele Dlakavu, Aḍivhaho Ramaite, Zikho Dana, and Esihle Lupindo; thank you for your encouragement, and for listening to my ramblings. This work happens in community, and without you, I would have long given up.

To my community of chosen family, Siphamandla Cingo, Leboghang Nkambule, Yonela Mjangqeka, Lusanda Langa, Sinazo Gxumisa, and many others whom I have not mentioned, but hold dear to my heart; "come and bask in this joy with me; I am here because you held my hand. Your sisterhood has made this terror of a life light and breathable."- Upile Chisala.

To Ndapwa Alweendo; thank you so much for taking the time to read and edit this thesis.

Lastly, my deepest gratitude to the NRF and the Mellon Foundation for their financial support, and to Sibulele Duba of the Politics department for always being of assistance administratively.

DEDICATION

For my mother, Nomvuyiseko

Abstract

This study examines the everyday conceptions and navigations of citizenship by Xhosa widows. It examines widows' own understandings and experiences of citizenship once the official mourning period, known amongst amaXhosa as ukuzila, has ended. The study draws from 14 interviews with Xhosa widows from the Amalinda, Tsholomnqa, Mdantsane, Magcumeni, KwaNonkcampa, and Dimbaza areas in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. This thesis contextualises claims to widowhood in the context of democratic South Africa, and the various ways in which widowed women conceptualise their lives after ukuzila. While ukuzila itself is written about in the literature, the contentious claims to widowhood and the ways in which women come to make sense of their lives in the post-mourning period remains largely unexplored. Interviews were conducted with women who had undertaken customary and/or civil marriages, had divorced or separated from their partners, or had cohabited. They reveal that widowhood is tenuous and as such, remains contested and contestable. The study demonstrates that much of the claims to widowhood are made because of the undeniable labour that women perform during the partnerships, where they are the primary economic providers. The study shows that whether in the formal and informal sector, women have been central in building the economic livelihoods of their families. In the post-mourning period, the theme of ukuhlala (to stay) that is articulated by widows, shows that they choose to remain in their marital homes to protect what they have laboured for. The findings demonstrate that the key to 'good' widowhood is intricately linked to 'good' motherhood. For Xhosa widows, much of their decision-making, and livelihood strategies, rests on how they craft good livelihoods for their families. These include a negotiation of feminist economies with woman-centred networks, a reliance on spirituality, as well as negotiations for dignity and respect within the homestead through the protection and maintenance of what they have built over the years.

IsiXhosa terms used in the study

Ukuzila: Mourning period expressed through demonstrating respect by avoidance

Ukuhlala: To stay/ To remain rooted

Makoti: A new bride

Ukuhlonipha: Being respectful

Ukukhuthala: Being dutiful and industrious within the homestead

Ukuyalwa: Elder council

Ukuhota: A period wherein the new bride is inducted into wifehood through the performance of chores for the groom's family

Ulwaluko: Xhosa cultural practice of initiating young boys from boyhood into manhood

Ukuphanda: To 'hustle'

Isiduko (s.)/ Iziduko (pl.): Clan name(s)

Isidima: Human dignity

Ukuzithutha: Reciting one's clan names

Abakhaphi: Accompaniers

Ukukhatshwa: Being accompanied

Umntwana wabo: Their child/ Their loved one

Ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwana: Remaining rooted at the homestead for safeguarding the inheritance, wellbeing, and dignity of the children

Ukuyovela: To be in attendance/ to be present

Ubufazi: Womanhood/ Wifehood

Ubumama: Motherhood

Ubuhlolokazi: Widowhood

Ukunxityiswa: A ceremony of welcoming the new bride, where she is dressed in new makoti regalia by the groom's family, and given elderly council

Umhlolokazi (s.)/ Abahlolokazi (pl.): A widow/ widows

Amadhaki: German print dress

Isimnyama: Darkness associated with bad luck

Imigalelo: Stokvels

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Locating widowhood in democratic South Africa

This study seeks to examine the ways in which Xhosa widows navigate and negotiate their widowhood after the mourning period, known amongst amaXhosa as ukuzila[1], has ended. Mate in Bennet and Pereira (2013) argues that widowhood as a state of being may be said to be contestable for social, economic, and legal reasons. This study seeks to understand the ways in which culturally and historically significant factors influence ways of constituting marriages, the mourning process, as well as ways of being after ukuzila.

In this chapter, it is important to demonstrate the historical context from which widowhood in post-apartheid South Africa emerges. Bennet and Pereira (2013) note that often, the assumption is that widowhood presupposes marriage. However, the work of Hunter (2016) in *Is it enough to talk of marriage as a process? Legitimate co-habitation in Umlazi, South Africa;* questions the idea of formal marriages as the only way to exercise or demonstrate legitimate partnerships in South Africa. Hunter (2005, 2010) explains the cultural importance placed on ukwakha umuzi - building a homestead. He (2016) explains that declining marriage rates in South Africa are due to labour migration, segregationist apartheid policies, and the resultant economic challenges for the black majority. The findings of the study point to these alternative modes of partnership that women and men have fashioned in the face of socio-economic

[1] In this study, I will not be using italics when using concepts or terms from IsiXhosa or indigenous African languages in general, as is the norm in English literature. Instead, words that appear in italics signal book titles or other forms of titles. I do so as part of the larger debates around the politics of italicising African languages, where scholars such as Shange (2021), Masola (2020), and the South African news publication, *Mail & Guardian* (Pather, 2016) note that italicisation perhaps renders African languages as appendages, and ascribes them marginal status within literature. Therefore, while a glossary of IsiXhosa terms has been provided for ease of reference, I have chosen to resist the practice of italicisation as part of repositioning African languages as useful and integral in academic thought and writing. Please see: Shange, K. (2021). Malibongwe: Poems from the Struggle by ANC Women. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/02589001.2021.1938978., Masola, A. (2020). *Journeying Home, Exile And Transnationalism In Noni Jabavu And Sisonke Msimang's Memoirs*. PhD thesis, Rhodes University., and Pather, R. (14 April 2016). Othering SA languages stops here. Mail & Guardian. Available: https://mg.co.za/article/2016-04-14-othering-sa-languages-stops-here/.

challenges that cannot be separated from the legacies of racist apartheid policies. These ultimately influence the ways in which women and communities fashion their own ideas of what it means to be a widow.

As this study specifically focuses on Xhosa widows in the Eastern Cape, there are culturally and socially significant factors which contribute to the ways in which Xhosa widows navigate their widowhood. Xhosa culture, as will be shown in this study, is dynamic and the ways in which certain practices – such as the colour of mourning dress, duration of mourning, and the ways in which widows emerge out of this period of mourning – may vary for different women. These variations are determined by factors that cannot be considered as static and set in stone. While Chapter Two of this study outlines the theoretical background of widowhood and mourning amongst amaXhosa, it is important to note that how women experience and navigate these, may vary depending on familial, economic, and socio-cultural factors, as will be shown in Chapters Four and Five of this study.

Ngqangweni (2013) explains the practice of ukuzila as a cultural practice which focuses on the outward expression of mourning and, more specifically, refers to spousal mourning. Ukuzila refers to the notion of respect by avoidance (Ngqangweni, 2013), which entails particular ways of being for the widow who is still within her period of mourning. This is discussed in Chapter Two. For Ngqangweni (2013), ukuzila is particularly gendered, as there are different ways in which mourning amongst amaXhosa is enacted, with different expectations for men than for women. Ndlovu (2016) contextualises the gendered nature of widowhood in South Africa by drawing on the impact of the legacy of apartheid, and how the remnants of apartheid may still be felt in the ways that black women experience the loss of their partners in present-day South Africa.

This introductory chapter provides a conceptual base to situate the research questions of this study. It notes that widowhood in South Africa has been primarily studied under the frameworks of political widowhood and widowhood in times of crisis. The chapter argues that the everyday experiences of widows in democratic South Africa have not received sufficient scholarly attention. As such, the study situates itself within this gap of scholarship. This study examines the lives of Xhosa widows in their everyday navigations and experiences of citizenship

in democratic South Africa. It moves away from the banality of death as experienced within state-sanctioned violence and the HIV/AIDS crisis.

1.1.1 Political widowhood

The frequency of apartheid violence and death necessitated the politicisation of many funerals within the public space. In South Africa, this, coupled with the eminent threat of apartheid-sanctioned violence on black people, meant that funerals became a regular fixture of political and social life. As Ramphele (1996: 106) argues, "the funeral becomes a form of political theatre that has to be managed to achieve the desired outcomes for the political formation involved". In a context where systemic violence and the loss of black life became the norm, Ramphele (1996) wrote about the concept of 'political widowhood'. In this work, Ramphele (1996) claimed that the 'political widow' is one who is owned by the public, and that the political funeral signalled a widow's entry into the public arena. As such, many of the notable women who became known in the public imagination as widows, did so within this context where widowhood became a politicised identity.

In her work, Ramphele (1996) refers to a multitude of women, including the widows of the Cradock Four – notable amongst them Nyameka Goniwe – and other widows such as Dimpho Hani, Nohle Mohapi, and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. As Ramphele writes about the 'political widow', she also reflects on her own tenuous position and status as a woman who had had children with Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko. Ramphele's status as a widow is tenuous in this regard because Ntsiki Mashalaba, to whom Steve Biko was already married at the time, was the 'private' or 'codified' widow (Gordon-Chipembere, 2009). Ramphele emerged as the political widow because of her already known and well-established position in politics and her strong and undeniable activism. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, much like Ramphele, was also considered a political widow because of what the movement stood to benefit from her at the time, but ultimately transcended this status in her own right (Ramphele, 1996). Political widowhood, therefore, extended beyond those whose partners/spouses died in the struggle, but also includes those who "lived as 'widows' during the long periods of their spouses' imprisonment" (Ramphele, 1996: 101). However, the way that Ramphele (1996: 102) identifies herself as the "political widow who could never be", could also be applied to Winnie

Madikizela-Mandela; although she had previously held a position of prestige in the public's imagination as the 'Mother of the Nation', she was implicated and convicted of complicity in "unmotherly activities" which led to her being demonised in South Africa's public imagination (Ramphele, 1996).

However, Madikizela-Mandela still laid claim to her widowhood upon the passing of her ex-husband, Nelson Mandela in 2013. Although the couple had divorced in 1996, Madikizela-Mandela performed widowhood upon Mandela's death, laying claim to the Qunu homestead that had been given to her at the commencement of their customary marriage in 1958 (Dlamini, 2018). This will be expanded on in Chapter Five. In *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*, Mark Gevisser (2009) notes the way Epainette Mbeki and Govan Mbeki's marriage was markedly different from the new romance of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Nelson Mandela, and the firm relationship of Albertina and Walter Sisulu at the time of the arrests of their respective husbands, and their eventual life imprisonment in Robben Island. Govan and Epainette Mbeki's marriage was already broken. In his biography of Govan Mbeki, Bundy (2012:72) writes that in 1952, Epainette Mbeki confronted her husband insisting that either she left, or that her husband left their home and children in Mbewuleni, Idutywa:

> Domestically, a troubled marriage reached breaking point. In 1952, Epaneitte confronted him, insisting initially that she leave Mbewuleni and find a teaching job, before agreeing that he leave and that she would stay on with the trading store and the four children. And so in 1953 Govan left Idutywa.

Had the political context of the time been different, they may have each moved on (Gevisser, 2009). However, the apartheid government that jailed Govan Mbeki was also responsible for tying him and his wife together, even when prevailing circumstances demonstrated that the relationship was simply in name only. Gevisser (2009) also notes that, unlike the other wives of political prisoners, Epainette received little support from the liberation movement and its benefactors, due to her being isolated geographically and having neither the personality nor the connections to attract support in the ways that Winnie Madikizela-Mandela or Albertina Sisulu did. Even so, when Govan Mbeki died in 2001, Epainette Mbeki was spoken about as his widow even though they had remained separated even after his release from Robben Island in 1987.

The emergence of a clear idea of who the desirable political widow is, on the part of the liberation movement, is a point of interest here. This is a woman who could appeal to the public imagination in the ways that Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and Mamphela Ramphele did.

When writing on the life history of Catherine Chipembere, gender activist and the widow of one of Malawi's most decorated national heroes, Henry Masauko Chipembere, Gordon-Chipembere (2009) reflects on Ramphele's theoretical framework of political widowhood. Gordon-Chipembere (2009) posits that, in the same way that "political widows are chosen and targeted for specific tasks" (Ramphele (1996: 110), so was the role of Catherine Chipembere mobilized by the state. In looking at the ways in which widowhood has revealed itself in the history of Southern Africa, it is useful to look at the individuals who have occupied public imaginations as "political widows", and the ways in which, ultimately, the state and society in general benefit from mobilizing women's identities in particular ways, to the extent that these identities are made to be inextricably linked to the desired social memories of their husbands.

Gordon-Chipembere (2009) argues that there are different demands and expectations for the role of the 'private' widow, who is traditionally expected to mourn for at least a year after the death of her husband, and to limit her movements as a public display of her loss and mourning in Southern African culture. In the case of political widowhood, whereby political formations have specifically chosen and targeted these women for specific tasks**,** they have also mobilized culturally and socially significant beliefs surrounding women and their role in grief and mourning processes. Ramphele (1996) explains that women's bodies in general are often viewed as sacred or profane in society, and as such, widows assume even greater potential responsibility for ritual danger. However, the utilisation of widowhood as an identity was not always passively exerted onto women. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, for example, strategically utilised and invoked her role as the political widow of one of South Africa's most celebrated political prisoners, Nelson Mandela (Ramphele, 1996). She did this through utilising ANC memorabilia during the time of its banning and quoting Nelson Mandela in public speeches, despite the illegality of these actions "without any direct action from the security system" (Ramphele, 1996: 105).

Moving into the post-1994 moment, and the ways in which widowhood was mobilized in the public space, the ideas posited by Cynthia Kros in her work on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Marikana Commission provide important context for this study. Kros (2017) makes the argument that the widows of Marikana represent a new and more autonomous type of 'political widow' than that put forth in Ramphele (1996). For Kros, "the behaviour and appearance of the political widow in the 1990s was, despite the reprieve she enjoyed from some of the more humiliating protocols, circumscribed and managed by her male political comrades" (2017:47). One could argue that the main reason there may be differences is the idea that the 'political widow' of the 1990s needed to present a socially acceptable image to the public i.e. one that was fit to embody the memory of the deceased husband. The work of Asanda Benya (2015) in her study on Marikana, and the invisible labour force of women, alerts us to the ways in which the widow identity itself may be said to be tenuous and evolving. Benya (2015) cautions against the homogenisation of the women of Marikana, as the position of most of these women was that of mistresses to mineworkers. In the context of migrant labour, it is these women who performed labour in the migrant workers' homes, as opposed to their legally recognised wives, who often remained behind in the areas from which the migrants originated – usually the Eastern Cape, Lesotho, and Mozambique (Benya, 2015). This argument leads to a questioning of the ways in which, when reference is made to the 'widows' of Marikana within public discourse, it should also be understood that this is contested and contestable. This argument will be explored further in chapters Four and Five of this study.

Kros (2017) makes an argument about the widows of Marikana, wherein the widows subverted the traditional ideas surrounding widowhood (of silence and seclusion) when they chose to speak on behalf of their husbands at the Marikana Commission. Kros (2017) specifically uses the example of Seipati Mlangeni as an entry into understanding the plausible difference between the political widow of the 1990s, and the 'new' political widow, a position now occupied by the widows of Marikana. In 1996, Mlangeni gave her testimony at the Human Rights Violations Committee (HRVC) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and although she lamented about the anguish she had experienced as a result of being a widow, she also appeared stoic in her testimony, and could hardly be considered as one who was weak or lacking in the verbal resources to express her opinion or assert her personhood (Kros, 2017). Kros (2017:44) makes use of Ramphele's conception of the 'political widow' to underscore the

notion that the political widow of the 1990s were, by way of embodying the legacies of their husbands, “exempted from the usual demeaning external aspects of widowhood, such as the dress code”.

For Marikana widows, however, things were markedly different. One of the widows, Mrs Mesdames Gadlela, expressed explicitly that “we are (the) laughable widows of Marikana” (Marikana Transcripts 13 August 2014: 34964 in Kros (2017: 52)). This sentiment was expressed because many of the widows were unable to take off their mourning clothes, with several references made to the expenses that come with performing the necessary cleansing ceremonies to remove the mourning dress (Kros, 2017). The mourning dress made them conspicuous to the public, leaving them open to ridicule from people from their communities for attending the Commission while wearing mourning dress, and from people in Rustenburg where the Commission sat (Kros, 2017). However, many widows were vehement about speaking at the Marikana Commission because they wanted to subvert the dominant narratives in the mainstream media of their husbands as ‘criminals’ (and therefore without basic human rights) and humanise their struggle and their tragic deaths. Kros (2017) makes the important argument that the political widowhood that emerges from the Marikana massacre is one which raised their voices above societal disapproval and claimed a proprietary relationship to the workers’ struggle. This was different to the political widow posited in Ramphele (1996) who often needed to sacrifice her own expressions of personal grief, in accordance with the etiquette prescribed by the liberation organisation to which they belonged. The widows of Marikana demonstrate the evolving notion of political widowhood and the ways in which societal imperatives of seclusion and silence were subverted, for their own aims.

One can see this interdependency of sociability and individual isolation as well in the literature. Ngqangweni (2013) and Magudu (2004) both narrate the experiences of black South Africans during their mourning periods. Both scholars have observed the heightened visibility needed in the time of mourning when one enters the public eye, as well as the silences and isolation that one needs to observe (Magudu, 2004; Ngqangweni, 2013). This contradiction and tension is made evident when Ngqangweni (2013) writes of the continued emphasis on the visibility of mourners and engages the work of Soga (1989), who notes that traditionally, it was considered taboo for mourners to be seen outside of their homestead. In these works (Magudu,

2004; Ngqangweni, 2013; Soga, 1989), the gendered dimension of heightened visibility, whilst still maintaining silence and isolation is emphasised. Ngqangweni (2013) explains that this gendered dimension exists because of patriarchy in the ways in which women's visibilities are heightened during the time of mourning as a way of controlling her movements, freedom, as well as her sexuality. This is not the case for men, as will be shown in Chapter Two of the study. Magudu (2004) explains that this gendered dynamic is also about demonstrating respect towards ancestors, and that the adherence to the ethos of showing respect to the male head of the household may be a marker and determinant of social order. The benefits of adhering to this ethos and conducting oneself in ways which demonstrate respect, will be explored in Chapter Two of the study.

In *A Self-Defining Universe? Case Studies from the Special Hearings: Women of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2008), Babara Russell explains that when giving evidence in the hearings of the HRVC, women dominated and often, the stories related by these women were about the violations committed against male members of their families: their sons, husbands, brothers, and fathers. However, this may also be attributed to the largely ignored gendered nature of the HRV Committee, wherein the line of questioning used in the public hearings often solely situated women's experiences within severe sexual violation and sexual violence. This, as put forward by Ross (2003), ultimately served to diminish the everyday roles that these women played as part of their political activism in the liberation movement.

Engaging with the ideas around political widowhood by Ramphele (1996), the case studies of the women in the HRV Committees of the TRC, as well as the Marikana Commission, provide a thread of the ways in which widowhood has emerged in popular discourse in South Africa during the apartheid era, and after. Ross (2003) notes that the notion of testifying or telling one's story is a formulation that became more applicable and widely acceptable in post-slavery and post-colonial discourse in Africa. Often, the lenses through which we look at black life, even in these so-called moments of 'truth-telling', are through extreme occurrences of violence. The political experiences that are not necessarily gruesome, and violent in their imagery, are seldomly accounted for.

Veena Das' *Language and Body: Transactions in the construction of pain* (1996) becomes an important entry-point into the work of mourning, and how this work emerges in sites

of collective violence and post-colonies. The gendered nature of mourning and grief work becomes evident in the stark contrast in our expectations of women, and the resultant behaviours of men. Das (1996) explains that in the course of everyday life, men can be said to dominate the public domain in terms of their control over speech. However, in the event of death, they become mute.

This study will demonstrate that mourning and grief work can be used for the purposes of nation-building, particularly in contexts which have seen unprecedented levels of collective violence. Das (1996: 85) writes that "the bodies of the women were surfaces on which texts were to be written and read – icons of the new nation". This argument will be expanded on in Chapter Two, in terms of the role of widows and the ways in which marriages were crafted within the nation-building rhetoric.

Widowhood in society has been viewed in particular ways throughout history. The concept of widowhood in and of itself – both as a role and as an identity marker in society – has been in existence for centuries. However, the ways in which widowhood has been spoken about within the discipline of Political Studies are often through sites of violence and the mass-memorialisation of loss, as will be argued in greater depth in Chapter Two. Arguably, much of what emerges when analysing widows' lives are the moments of spectacular violence, or a reduction of widows' lives to being purely defined by victimhood and passive in nature. The study will demonstrate that the ways in which widowhood has emerged in the South African public imagination has largely been through state-sanctioned violence, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as well as the commissions that have taken place i.e. the TRC as well as the Marikana Commission. All of these are moments of crisis, with little attention paid to the navigations of widowhood in everyday life.

1.1.2 Widowhood, crisis and the everyday

In the broader context of sub-Saharan Africa, the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, among other forms of violence, resulted in an increase in the occurrence of funerals (Durham and Klaits, 2002). The HIV/AIDS crisis permeated society and left widespread death and grief in its wake. While HIV/AIDS is still a reality in our context, it initially took place within a framework of crisis.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa has disproportionately affected women, who accounted for 54 % of all new HIV infections in 2018 (UNAIDS, 2020). This recognition of the gendered nature of the AIDS crisis has led scholars such as Hunter (2005) to explore the ways in which this epidemic has necessitated a historically and culturally rooted analysis into violent and risky masculinities. Hunter's work (2005) traces the trope of traditionalism within debates about sexuality, wherein popular discourse has tended to characterise African people as inherently diseased and promiscuous. Through an understanding of the cultural politics of multiple partners, Hunter (2005) alerts us to the idea that these politics were intertwined with contestations over the roles and duties of women in society. Differential claims over multiple partners are embodied in the notions of isoka (broadly, a Zulu man with multiple partners) and isifebe (a derogatory term used to refer to 'loose' women) (Hunter, 2005).

These contestations have evolved due to the socio-economic climate of South Africa, and changing material and economic livelihoods. Decoteau (2013) and Hunter (2005) both detail the ways in which transactional sex, for example, has been a factor in the context of the demands of the neoliberal economy. Decoteau (2013: 155) argues that in examining the HIV/AIDS crisis through an analyses of gender, we find that "the sexualization of politics reveals a deep-rooted anxiety about the identity of the post-apartheid nation and its relationship to Western culture and politics". This anxiety emanates from the state's desire to build a particular image of the South African post-apartheid nation, despite glaring gendered, racial, and economic inequalities. It is in the midst of this anxiety that a rights versus culture discourse often emerges when analysing tropes of 'traditionalism' and 'modernity', and how these are used by communities and the state to achieve different political ends. The culture versus rights discourse is also evident in how the literature positions widowhood (as explored later in the study), particularly within mourning practices across Africa.

Tenkorang (2014: 47) notes that "while it is documented that HIV positive widows may have been infected by their deceased male partners, widowhood in sub-Saharan Africa, by itself, poses significant HIV risks to women." An example is the mourning rituals among the Luo of Kenya, wherein upon the death of one's husband, Luo women often go through a cleansing ritual that involves widows having unprotected sexual intercourse with the inheritor, in order to be re-initiated into society (Tenkorang, 2014). This is a part of the cultural practice of widow

inheritance which is practiced in many parts of Africa – including ethnic groups in Uganda such as the Banyankole, Bagisu, Bakiga, Teso, Batoro, Lugbara, Acholi, and Alur – and is cited as a major source of HIV risk among widows in Africa (Tenkorang, 2014). For the widows, although the practice of widow inheritance poses a significant risk of contracting HIV, it also "serves as an avenue through which widows gain social and economic rights" (Tenkorang, 2014: 47). Therefore, as can be seen in the practice of (at times sexual) widow inheritance, widowhood emerges within the HIV/AIDS crisis in a culture versus rights discourse that is also static in its understanding of women's own experiences and navigations of these practices.

Gordon-Chipembere (2009) draws on the work of Liz Gunner in noting the grave silences around the lives of women. This silence is especially evident in the public sphere, where the public stories of men are represented as the full picture and sum total of a nation's history. The erased moments in the lives of women which parallel historical and nationalist movements often remain unspoken. Therefore, it becomes paramount to understand that the personal and the political are deeply intertwined, and that widowhood provides a site for more nuanced understandings of citizenship for black women, ones that move beyond the binaries of violence and peace, or voice and silence. Instead, these new understandings seek to discern the complexities of these women's lives as they navigate their way in a society which seeks to conceptualise them through a singular lens of cultural expectations, societal invisibility and silence. This study therefore seeks to examine the ways in which Xhosa widows craft their own navigations of citizenship and belonging within their homes and their communities.

1.2 Citizenship and a precarious political economy

In *The Multi-Layered Citizen*, Yuval-Davis (1999) writes that citizenship needs to be understood as a multi-layered concept, wherein one's citizenship is understood as an interaction of various identities/positions such as the local, ethnic, national, state, cross-state or trans-state, as well as supra-state. The important theoretical contribution of Yuval-Davis' work to feminist conceptions of citizenship, is that citizenship is often affected, and/or partly constructed by the relationships and positions of each layer within a specific historical context. Yuval-Davis (1999) further argues that there is a need to analytically separate the concept of citizenship from that of the nation-state

entirely, while still being cognizant of the importance of keeping and expanding the concept of citizenship to be more inclusive of the nuanced lives of African Women.

Yuval-Davis's argument, however, is born from a dissatisfaction with the ways in which claims to citizenship for African women have been relegated and neglected along dichotomous public and private, state and culture lines. This is further explored in Chapter Two, when analysing the theoretical origins of the public-private divide, and how far conceptions of citizenship have come from the work of mainstream theories of citizenship scholars such as T.H Marshall (1950), who did not account for conceptions of citizenship that go beyond the nation-state rhetoric. Therefore, when this study refers to widows' 'everyday navigations of citizenship', it does so to move away from statist conceptions of citizenship which encompass factors such as citizen status, or the right to vote. As the study will show, the 'everyday navigations of citizenship' for Xhosa widows includes factors such as dignity, belonging, and respect.

When examining widows' navigations of citizenship in South Africa, the ways in which widowhood emerges on a historical level in South Africa, and how both marriage and widowhood were galvanized for the aims of nationalist rhetoric in the form of nation-building, become evident. Therefore it is important for this study to explore the multi-layered nature of citizenship for the Xhosa widow. In *Making motherhood work: women's child support claims, race, and the remaking of citizenship in SA, 1958-2015*, Brady G'sell makes the case that "the content of citizenship is created and negotiated at the micro-political scale of interpersonal relationship through the everyday processes by which people seek to fashion a secure existence." (2018: xii).

Drawing from the argument posited by G'sell (2018: 4) when demonstrating the ways that black women have had to craft their own navigations within the political economy of the nation, the study will demonstrate the ways in which widows have built "resource networks across families, friends, and communities that outlined alternative conditions of debt and duty not grounded in either a marital contract or relations or affinity." In investigating these alternative modes of women's economic contexts, the conceptualisation of woman-centred networks as feminist economies will be explored as key factors in the study. Raniga and Ngcobo (2014), when reflecting on the economic experiences of single mothers in KwaZulu-Natal, detail

the ways in which individual livelihood activities such as agricultural production, bead-making, sewing, catering, and hairdressing, provide a platform from where one can develop livelihood strategies that are often excluded in mainstream economics. In this study, it will be found that not only do mainstream economics create a gap where these strategies are not accounted for, but that these strategies form the bulk of black women's ability to negotiate their national belonging and fashion sustainable livelihoods in the South African context.

Amadiume (1987) and Oyewumi's (1997) views on the concept of matrifocality will be used in the study to illustrate that the production unit and the ideological base of common motherhood have a dialectical relationship, and that being industrious is a significant part of how women make sense of their roles as widows and mothers, and ultimately, their ways of navigating a society whose institutions are inherently patriarchal.

1.3 Research Objectives

This thesis examines the ways in which Xhosa widows navigate and experience their citizenship after the mourning period of ukuzila has ended. The main question that guides this study is: how does widowhood reconfigure Xhosa widows' citizenship in the post-mourning period?

Sub-objectives of the study include:

- To understand Xhosa women's conceptions of widowhood.
- To examine what familial and/or communal perceptions of ukuzila do in shaping Xhosa widows' public and private lives as citizens in the post-mourning period.
- To examine how Xhosa widows understand their access to their rights and citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa.

1.4 Chapter Outline of the Study

This study is organized into six chapters. This first chapter served to introduce the context in which the study takes place, and outlined the history of widowhood's emergence in popular South African discourse. The themes of violence and the memorialisation of loss emerged as significant in the ways that we have come to understand widowhood. Additionally, the reality of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa provided a site from which to see how a great emergence of widowhood took place, particularly from the 1980s and into the 2000s.

This chapter also briefly outlined the tenuous and contestable nature of widowhood as a state of being, in the context of declining marriage rates due to migrant labour and a collapsed wage labour system. Ultimately, this chapter served to provide context as to how widowhood has emerged in our history, as well as in understanding what widowhood may mean in democratic South Africa. The need for theoretical underpinnings of alternative understandings of citizenship, when the mainstream nation-state approach does not account for the nuanced lives of Xhosa widows, were also noted. The use of theoretical concepts such as matrifocality and feminist economies will be useful in this regard, to provide a basis for the exploration of livelihood strategies for Xhosa widows in South Africa.

Chapter Two of the study will provide a historical thread of mourning and grief practices globally, in order to locate widowhood within political studies in South Africa. The historical evolution of citizenship theory will also be used to discuss how feminist conceptions of citizenship have emerged to replace mainstream conceptions that have been inadequate in demonstrating how the personal is intertwined with the political.

Chapter Three describes the methodological underpinnings of the study. This chapter locates the study in the areas of East London, Qonce, and Mdantsane in Eastern Cape, South Africa. The study makes use of qualitative research methods, wherein semi-structured in-depth interviews with 14 Xhosa widows, and the founder of the Widows Empowerment Programme (WEP) in Cape Town were conducted. In this chapter, I also make a case for the significance of clan-lineage in Xhosa culture, and the ways in which this added nuance to my relationships with some of the women when conducting this study. Thematic analysis is used to locate the voices of the women adequately and truthfully in the study.

In Chapter Four, the findings of the study are detailed, and the major themes are identified. These include: variations of forms of partnership and the tenuous nature of widowhood; the notion of ukuhlala (being rooted) for the purposes of securing the livelihoods of one's children; the role of spirituality during and after the time of ukuzila; as well as modes of fashioning existence within the community such as imigalelo (stokvels), ooMasiphekisane (communal schemes to help one another in the catering of events through providing groceries and physical labour), and ooMasingcwabane (funeral schemes).

Chapter Five of the study discusses the themes detailed in chapter four, and links them with the theoretical frameworks put forth in Chapter Two. This allows for a greater understanding of where we can claim to locate widowhood in democratic South Africa, how these women function and navigate their lives within society, and the nuanced experiences of citizenship for Xhosa women once the mourning period has ended.

Chapter Six concludes the study.

Chapter Two

"Widowhood presupposes marriage": Gendered grief work and citizenship

2.1 Introduction

Bennett and Pereira (2013:116) argue that current understandings of widowhood as a state of being often presuppose marriage. Therefore, to fully understand the ways in which Xhosa widows navigate their lives, it is important to examine the literature which engages conceptions of marriage and partnership in African societies. As the chapter will show, understandings of marriage and partnership provide insights into the ways in which marriage confers identity, belonging, access, and status. This chapter first outlines the gendered nature of marriage and constructions of marriage in South Africa. In so doing, an understanding of the constructions of masculinities and femininities in partnerships, as well as what these do for the construction of the postcolonial nation will be evaluated. It is important to first begin with these gendered constructions to understand the ruptures and continuities that these translate to in the event of death. A thorough understanding of how heteronormative partnerships come to form an integral part of the nation-building rhetoric, will lay the foundation for where widowhood is situated within the discipline of Political Studies.

Chapter One showed that in South Africa, black widows have been theorized in the context of spectacular violence, particularly within the context of apartheid, the Marikana massacre and the HIV/AIDS crisis. This chapter will further demonstrate that the experiences of widows are mainly documented in the context of having survived and been a part of liberation movements, state sanctioned violence, civil wars, and the memory-making efforts on the part of the nation-state that follow such violence and death. The next section traces the theoretical arguments that have occupied global scholars with regards to the notions of grief, mourning rites, practices, and widowhood in the disciplines of anthropology, psychology and sociology. The section draws on specific debates in Europe, South Asia and China. The literature provides a thread (historical and present) of the undeniable work done by women in shaping public definitions of death and memory.

Finally, the chapter makes a case for understandings of everyday citizenship, as posited by feminist theories of citizenship. With feminist theories of citizenship, it is argued that notions

of belonging and culture need to also be understood within the prism of citizenship. Furthermore, the chapter utilises the theory of matrifocality posited by Amadiume (1987) in how it demonstrates the importance placed on female industriousness in building an independent homestead. This theory is used in conjunction with scholars such as Motsemme (2011) in illustrating some of the ways in which women formulate livelihoods for themselves as alternative negotiations of belonging where the state often falls short. The chapter therefore aims to demonstrate the need to situate Xhosa widows, within the ways in which they make claims to their widowhood within their varied forms of partnership. The chapter will detail the ways in which widows ultimately make use of cultural signifiers of good womanhood and good motherhood, in order to craft navigations of everyday citizenship.

2.2 Matricentric marriages: Isihlonipho nokukhuthala (Respect and Industriousness)

It is worth noting that much of the literature on marriage and partnerships in the South African context are studies focused on Zulu people and Zulu culture in KwaZulu-Natal, as can be seen in the work of Chambers (2000); Hosegood, McGrath and Moultrie (2009); Hunter (2010 and 2016); Posel, Rudwick and Casale (2011); as well as Rudwick and Posel (2015). Hodgson and McCurdy (2001) provide a useful analysis of looking at the gendered dynamic of marriage in contexts such as Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, as well as the Basotho people of South Africa in their widely celebrated work, *"Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa*. Although this work focuses heavily on such themes as women's choices to enact decisions – for example, divorcing their husbands in staunchly patriarchal societies (Hodgson and McCurdy, 2001) – it provides meaningful insight into the intricate ways in which gender impacts the nature and work of marriage.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to trace the contextually significant values and beliefs about these cultural codes of behaviour during marriage in order to understand the ways in which these may be said to rupture or continue during the time of widowhood. When this study makes reference to the 'work of marriage', it does so with the understanding of how one's conduct within marriage, provides mobilities within the social system of the homestead in conferring belonging, and access to respect and social status. As this section will show, culturally

significant markers such as isihlonipho nokukhuthala (respect by restraint, and industriousness) that have been performed during marriage, need to be maintained by women as widows in order to bargain for status and access to dignity and respect. This is important, as it will later be shown that the observances of restraint and avoidance during the period of ukuzila are an extension of what has already been practiced during the time of being a new bride (makoti). In other words, the bargains that one makes for respect, dignity, and autonomy in widowhood, are ones that have also been made as a makoti.

Alfred Radcliffe-Brown's *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* published in 1950, is considered a foundational text of structural functionalism by renowned scholars within the field of social anthropology, such as Hunter (2016). It is useful to use this text as a starting point to understand how marriage customs function in a social system, the mobilities that they provide within these systems, as well as the role of lineage groups in their ability to organize societies (Hunter, 2016: vii). However, as will be explained in subsequent paragraphs, the work of Radcliffe-Brown (1950) is useful insofar as it provides a theoretical background for aspirations of mobilities provided by marriage customs within a social system. The rewards for adhering to these systems are not always guaranteed for women.

Radcliffe-Brown (1950) explains the influence of lineage categories in everyday life amongst the Lozi people of colonial Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), as well as the Zulu people of KwaZulu-Natal. In his work, Radcliffe-Brown explains that the influence of lineage categories can be seen in how, amongst Zulu people, the relationships of those who are related by marriage (affine relationships) are marked by restraint and avoidance. For Zulu people, the new bride is not allowed to go to certain parts of the village and must avoid the milk and meat of her husband's homestead until a ceremony is performed for her (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950). Additionally, she must also cover her body in certain ways when she is in the presence of her male in-laws, and must avoid making use of the radicals of their names, as a way of showing her in-laws respect (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950). The radical of one's name would be the exact family name, for example. This avoidance is referred to amongst the Zulu people as ukuhlonipha (Ngidi, 2013). In this vocabulary, new words would be used in place of certain names and other words that sound like these names, as a way of showing respect to the in-laws (Ngidi, 2013).

Ukuhlonipha (being respectful) is also upheld amongst amaXhosa wherein a new bride's (makoti) desirability and position within the family lies in her ability to conduct herself with good behaviour (Soga, 1989; Bongela, 2001; Ngqangweni, 2013). Ukuhlonipha is premised on an avoidance of behaviour and utterances that may be considered disrespectful (Ngqangweni, 2013). Additional to the ways outlined in the ukuhlonipha practice amongst Zulu people (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950; Ngidi, 2013), Soga (1989) notes that part of the ukuhlonipha practice amongst Xhosa people entails an avoidance of certain areas within the marital homestead, such as the kraal where the cattle reside. The kraal is considered as sacred in its purpose of providing a site wherein the ancestors of that homestead may reside (Ngqangweni, 2013). Ukuhlonipha therefore, is not only undertaken to demonstrate respect to one's in-laws, but to the ancestors of the homestead as well. While the practice of ukuhlonipha may be said to be observed in other life stages (i.e. boyhood, girlhood, being a young man, being a young woman, and being a newly wedded young man), Bongela (2001) notes that it is the makoti who bears the brunt of ukuhlonipha the most. This is part of the labour that women undertake during the time of marriage, that provides them with access to status, respect, and belonging.

In addition to ukuhlonipha, lies the notion of ukukhuthala, which can be loosely translated to one's ability to be a dutiful and industrious wife within the homestead (Magadla, 2017). Ukuhlonipha and ukukhuthala are made particularly visible during the period of ukuhota, wherein the bride is welcomed into the groom's family through the performance of chores. The makoti is also welcomed by being given a new name through the process of ukuyalwa (being given elderly council) (Bongela, 2001; Ngqangweni, 2013). Noteworthy, is the role of other women in the induction of the makoti into the family, and how these links continue in the time of widowhood. Finlayson in Mesthrie (2002) notes the active role played especially by the eldest sister-in-law (known as Indodakazi in IsiXhosa), in instructing the new bride. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, Sossou (2002) notes the role of sisters-in-law, lineage daughters, or female husbands, as particularly important during funerals. While the literature on the relationships between new brides and sisters-in-law is lacking, the findings of the study will show that the role of the sister-in-law is often emphasised as instrumental in both the period of being welcomed into the homestead, and in ensuring that the newly widowed woman is successfully released from her period of mourning. The relationships built during the time of marriage, continue into one's time of widowhood.

In a study on women in African marriages, Olaore and Agwu (2020) note that 'good' womanhood is tied to the woman's ability to justify the cost of marrying her, rather than her being a person worthy of dignity and respect. The gendered labour underscored in culturally-specific concepts such as ukuhlonipha, ukuhota, and ukukhuthala, highlight the notion put forth by Mntambo (2021:122) in that "the reality for black women is that work and working is their condition". The reality, as will be shown in Chapter Four of this study, is that for black women, the labour performed prior to, and during their partnerships, is not the automatic qualifier for access to status, respectability and belonging in their time of widowhood. Widowhood provides a site to acknowledge where the ruptures and continuities may lie in accessing status, respectability and belonging. Important for this study, therefore, are the ways in which widows bargain for, or maintain, their dignity and respect in their homesteads and communities long after their partners have passed on.

Scholars such as Hunter (2005, 2010) have demonstrated that for men, acquiring full manhood is dependent on fulfilling certain roles and stages in life. For Zulu men, ukwakha umuzi (building a homestead) and being uMnumzana (a homestead head) is the ultimate display of successful manhood (Hunter; 2005, 2010). A similar argument could be made amongst amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. However, as Livermon (2015) highlights, the persistent practice of ulwaluko (the cultural initiation from boyhood into manhood) still presides as a significant marker of successful manhood. Undergoing ulwaluko has significant implications for one's public life and participation (Livermon, 2015). An uninitiated individual would be subject to lifelong ridicule and exclusion (Livermon, 2015). For women, Mupotsa (2015: 74) explains that within various texts and lessons (i.e. magazines, movies, and societal attitudes), young girls are "invited to aspire towards becoming an ideal bride". Becoming an ideal bride functions as a mode of feminine development (Mupotsa, 2015). Becoming a bride, i.e. marriage, provides a site for the legitimate sexual expression of love (Singh, 2013), and provides one with access to spaces and platforms reserved for married women. These articulations of femininities and masculinities become intricately linked to notions of respectability, personhood, and belonging within the post-apartheid state. Drawing from the argument put forth in Chapter One, from the study on the sexualisation of politics within the HIV/AIDS epidemic in post-apartheid South Africa, Decoteau (2013) notes that it becomes important to analyse these gendered meanings and relations because crises of postcolonial identity are articulated in and through them.

2.3 Gendered nation-building rhetoric: Contributions of feminist conceptions of citizenship

Nation-building rhetoric has historically been built on the heterosexual nuclear family in the global context, and more specifically, in South Africa. While apartheid had its influence on the beliefs and behaviours towards marriage for black people in South Africa, the nature of marriage in the legal sense, was heavily influenced by the anti-black rhetoric on which apartheid was founded (Hosegood, McGrath, and Moultrie, 2009; Chambers, 2000). Other work that speaks to this comes from scholars such as Mahmood Mamdani (1997) in his renowned work, *Citizen and Subject*. Here, Mamdani (1997) makes the argument for the bifurcated state, in that the era of colonialism brought with it the mandate of a 'civilizing mission' to Africa, and thus created a bipolar scheme of citizenship. In this scheme of citizenship, customary justice was dispensed by both black and white chiefs and commissioners on black Africans, whilst modern justice was dispensed to white people by white magistrates. Mamdani (1997) further clarifies that the hallmark of this modern state was civil law, wherein citizens in civil society were governed. It then became starkly clear who was a citizen befitting of being a part of civil society, and who was intentionally and systematically excluded from this narrative. This also had implications for the ways in which justice was dispensed along gendered lines.

The stratification and pluralism of the legal system ultimately served to exacerbate the vulnerabilities and subordination of African women in the eyes of the law (Obiora, 2020). Particularly in the jurisdictions whereby common law was applicable, patriarchal imperatives were encoded as authoritative (Obiora, 2020). Hosegood, McGrath, and Moultrie (2009) elaborate on this when speaking of the history of civil and customary marriage in South Africa, within the context of the law and tradition surrounding African marriages. They explain that in post-apartheid South Africa, acts such as the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, Act 2 of 1998, were radical attempts, on the part of the state, to recognise the diverse religious and cultural identities in the country, as well as protecting the rights of women within the marriage (particularly as it pertains to rights towards their children and property) (Hosegood, McGrath, and Moultrie, 2009). Scholars such as Chambers (2000) have written of the ways in which during the years of white rule, partnerships recognised as "marriage" by law took only the form

of Christian or civil marriage that white people practiced. Customary or traditional marriages were not legitimized. However, Hosegood, McGrath, and Moultrie (2009) explain, the Customary Marriages Act served to recognise those marriages that were undertaken as customary and traditional marriages, as legal marriages. The conceptual underpinnings of what constitutes 'legitimate' marriages, particularly within the culture and rights discourse, becomes an important theme for this study, as this broadens the conception of, as well as the claims to, widowhood.

Hanicom in Gouws (2005: 30) notes that "the relationship between women, citizenship and the nation/state does not need to imply a biological reductionism". However, there is a gender-mediated belonging that takes place as a citizen, because of the mutual constitution between state and family. This rhetoric has been present in the ways in which marital narratives were broadcast as race-making and nation-building (Healy-Clancy, 2014). The nuclear family as an institution lay at the epicentre of the construction of a bourgeois nation-state (Bystrom, 2010).

However, Healy-Clancy (2014) also notes that the marriage narratives of a certain social grouping, specifically those who were mission-educated men and women, were broadcast as nation-building. This idea around marriage also altered the nature of marriage at the time, in a segregationist South Africa where, against an overarching state, "New African women" led "public-private homes" in their navigation of and relationship with the apartheid state (Healy-Clancy, 2014: 14). Healy-Clancy (2014) provides an understanding of the private, modern family at the time, noting that this family unit was in fact quite public in its inception. Bystrom (2010: 142) explains this thoroughly when engaging the nuances of the family narrative and the construction of democracy in South Africa, saying that "membership in the family meant membership in the nation, while separation from the family signaled one's status as an enemy of the state."

In a context which led to the bifurcated state, scholars studying the South African context such as Ndlovu (2016), have written about the ways in which widows have been disenfranchised and stripped of property rights, their dignity, as well as their social status and access. In response, widows have mobilized their understandings of their customary and common law marriages to legitimize their identities to their in-laws and the state. In order to understand the ways in which Xhosa widows navigate and negotiate their citizenship, it is worthwhile to begin by looking at

mainstream theories and ideas of citizenship, and posit those of feminist scholarship, because as Walby (1994) suggests, gender has been absent from discussions of citizenship. Therefore, the inclusion of gender into the narrative, even if it is to simply note that women have a different relationship to citizenship than men, is a necessary initial corrective step in the field of citizenship studies.

Scholars including Walby (1994) and Turner (1990) have used the undeniably influential work of T.H. Marshall as their starting point when discussing theories of citizenship. Marshall (1950) posits that there are three elements of citizenship, namely the civil, political, and social. Briefly, Marshall (1950) explains the civil as being composed of rights which are necessary for individual freedom such as the right to own property, the right to justice and so on. The political is explained as the right to participate in the exercise of political power in some or other capacity. Marshall goes on to explain that the social element of citizenship basically encapsulates one's right to be able to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards which prevail in society. Since the work of Marshall (1950); the field of citizenship studies has been heavily debated, and many scholars have adopted these three elements in order to analyse degrees of citizenship, as well as the development of citizenship in various democratic societies (Turner, 1990; Walby, 1994; Lister, 2005 and 2007; McEwan in Gouws, 2005).

Although Walby (1994) notes that this rights-based idea of citizenship has been steadily adopted – first with civil, then political, and lastly social rights – it is also important to note that this has taken place with particular reference to the Western context. Furthermore, where it has taken place, it has been gendered and racialized, privileging first white men and then white women. Much of the feminist scholarship on citizenship does criticize Marshall (1950) for not discussing degrees of citizenship obtained by different social groups at different times (Walby, 1994). In two of her works on the topic of citizenship, Ruth Lister (2005 and 2007), emphasises the idea of agency in understanding women's social and political lives as well as realising the potential of inclusive citizenship in this regard. Here, she notes that agency is what "lies at the heart of the theorization and politics of women's citizenship" (Lister, 2005: 19).

Feminist scholars such as Haysom (1999), McEwan in Gouws (2005), and Lister (2005), among others, all agree that citizenship is indeed a highly contested concept. For Lister (2005), citizenship is about membership and belonging, which involves the relationship between

individuals and the state/nation, as well as the relationships between individual citizens. Lister (2005) further explains the ways in which this belonging has implications for identity, which is an aspect that citizenship literature has tended to ignore. Citizenship, in this sense, ceases to focus solely on access to legal rights and legal status. It also becomes about a particular cultural identity for individuals and groups, such as sexual identity, gay rights, and more general claims to cultural identity (Turner in Lister, 2005). It is in this vein that feminist scholar, Yuval-Davis (1999: 119) writes in *The Multi-Layered Citizen,* that "citizenship needs to be understood as a multi-layered construct, in which one's citizenship in collectivities in the different layers- local, ethnic, national, state, cross- or trans-state and supra-state- is affected and often at least partly constructed by the relationships and positionings of each layer in specific historical context".

Both Yuval-Davis (1999) and Lister (2005) have cautioned against an essentialist reading of a 'woman's citizenship' where women's inclusion in the debates around citizenship takes place in a homogenous and one-dimensional way. As a result of the dichotomous public-private narrative inherent within traditional understandings of citizenship, scholars such as Yuval-Davis (1999) have made the argument for a shift away from conceptualising citizenship strictly within the framework of the nation-state, but expanding the concept to fit the nuanced lives of African women, without doing away with the notion of the nation-state completely.

Manicom in Gouws (2005: 28) also problematizes the concept of 'women's citizenship' and claims that, although this term has been useful in highlighting the gendered aspects of both inclusion as well as exclusion from practices, conceptualisations, and entitlements that come with citizenship, the term does also tend to reiterate the dominant notion of women as "inherently and uniformly disadvantaged" within discourses of citizenship. In doing so, there is the danger of reproducing gender as binary, heteronormative, and to be performed in the same ways across all contexts. For this study, this will be helpful to keep this concern at the fore in order to avoid studying Xhosa widows as uniformly disadvantaged, and to be able to appreciate their complex ways of being, and their own understandings and definitions of belonging.

Haysom (1999) notes further that citizenship is also a socially constructed term and as such, draws on the work of scholars such as Desiree Lewis (1999) to state that women's own definitions of citizenship are crucial, particularly when it comes to their understandings of belonging. Kristol and Dahinden (2020) make the assertion that citizenship is an important site

for a politics of belonging. However, to explore belonging accurately in this study, the understanding of citizenship itself must be one that goes beyond the statist conception of citizenship, utilises feminist conceptions in order to account for experiences of belonging and, possibly, non-belonging.

Yuval-Davis's work becomes an important entry point into understanding the politics of belonging, as it pertains to the ways in which these are influenced by gendered identities and subjectivities. Moving forward from the rigidity of attaining civil, political, and social rights in understanding citizenship, Yuval-Davis (1993) explains that there is a dualistic nature of women's citizenship which is rooted in both inclusion and exclusion from the general body of citizens. The argument made is that even in the instances where there is formal equality of women in their political rights as citizens, other modes of exclusion in the political, social, and civil spheres continue to persist. In the same ways in which we have come to use notions such as the 'political man' through Hobbesian theory, which have created dichotomous notions of how the political domain behaves and looks like, Yuval-Davis (1993: 631) warns that

> the notion of the generic 'woman' functions in feminist thought much the way the notion of generic 'man' has functioned in Western philosophy – it obscures the heterogeneity of women and cuts off examination of the significance of such heterogeneity for feminist theory and political activity.

Important in the work of Yuval-Davis for this study is the idea of collectivities and the ways in which the actual behaviours of women can also be said to be signifiers of ethnic and cultural boundaries. Cultural codes of styles of dress and behaviour, customs, and literary and artistic modes of production and language can identify people as members or non-members of a specific collectivity (Yuval-Davis, 1993).

This study will utilise the work of scholars such as Yuval-Davis in tracing notions of belonging and non-belonging for Xhosa widows, and the ways in which their various subjectivities provide a site to theorize a more inclusive kind of citizenship which accounts for self-definitions of womanhood and widowhood, negotiations of the political economy, as well as interactions with various societal stakeholders. These are the 'everyday' navigations of citizenship that the study aims to explore.

Gouws (2005) poses various questions which may be helpful to consider in this study. Firstly, how the political power of the category of 'women' can be retained without misrepresenting the perspectives or subsuming differences of women in different social locations and contexts. Secondly, how the category can be understood as unstable and contested while also serving as a site for feminist expression, identity, and politics. Lastly, what the political effects are for the different constructions of 'women'. These questions provide an interesting site to think about the various positions and identities occupied by widowed women in the context of democratic South Africa.

These arguments raise points of entry for this study, regarding the evolution of the nature of marriage in South Africa, and the ways in which the idea of the nuclear family as the legitimized family structure within the state, ignored the lived realities of the majority of the population. Statistics South Africa (2018) reported that from 1996 until 2016, black Africans reflected the highest proportion of cohabiting persons in the country. Ultimately, part of the contribution that this study will make in the literature is the argument that claims to widowhood may still take place outside of this legitimized rhetoric of civil marriage; through cohabitation, customary marriages, as well as divorced or separated partners. As the next section will demonstrate, much like nation-building rhetoric has been used to formulate normative modes of performing marriages, it is also present in ideals of memory-making within the nation. It is within this context of memory-making where widowhood has often been positioned in Political Studies.

2.4 Memorialising spectacular violence and loss: the widow in political studies

Across the globe, various cultures observe mourning practices, rites and traditions, in varying and similar ways. Much of what scholarship on widows and widowhood has gathered in the discipline of political science has been in the context of 'political widows' and 'war widows' (Ramphele, 1996; Kros, 2017; Whitmore, 2017). Often, the experiences of widows are only documented in the context of having survived and been a part of (for example) liberation movements, state sanctioned violence, and civil wars. This section aims to grapple with how and where we locate widowhood in the discipline.

Buitelaar in Bremmer and van den Bosch (1995) writes about historical widowhood, and how in Assyria, the term 'widow' was only associated with a woman if her husband and father-in-law had passed on and she had no son. Therefore, the term was not used to refer to a woman who had outlived her husband, but a woman who had neither male protection nor means of financial support to sustain herself. Therefore, the notion of widowhood in this context was relegated to women who needed to be supported in these ways and for whom special legal protection needed to be provided (Bremmer and van den Bosch, 1995). Bremmer and van den Bosch (1995) clarify that this would have been a question of association rather than a strict definition.

This is similar to the ideas posited by Shelton (2015), who examines poverty and widowhood in seventeenth-century New York. Historiographical literature on the topic demonstrates that women under Dutch law possessed legal and material advantages that Anglo-American widows did not (Shelton, 2015). Despite this, widowhood could prove to be an economic, physical, and emotional challenge for women of Dutch and Anglo descent alike (Shelton, 2015). Flint (2013) writes of the divergent expectations that confronted widows i.e. having to navigate and negotiate constant tensions with their family's preferences of remarriage, and churches ascribing virtue to widows who chose to remain with their children. All these expectations ignored what might have been beneficial to the widow in question (Flint, 2013).

Flint (2013: 15) draws from historian Joan Klein to say that:

> [T]he further our texts move away from theological assumptions about women's place and the nearer they come to describing the actual conditions of women's lives, the less emphasis we find on notions of women's subordination, inferiority, and frailty.

Although this is not explicitly accounted for in the literature, much of where we (in the discipline of political studies and elsewhere) come to view widows and widowhood is in the context of state sanctioned violence and war (see Bette, 2015; Butler, 2003; Das, 1996 and 2006; Genyi, 2013; Ibreck, 2010; Kros, 2017; Whitmore, 2017). Genyi (2013) explains that widows constitute a sizeable social category in Nigeria that is highly marginalised due to various cultural factors. Genyi accounts for this by detailing the surge in the deaths of many husbands caused by World War 1 and 2, Igbo programs of 1966, the violent political crisis in Western Nigeria in the

mid-1960s, the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, and the Tiv-Jukun crisis of the early 1990s and 2001, among other events – all of which have contributed to the rising number of widows in the country.

In Rwanda, the case is similar in the post-genocide context, although the work done in this context by Ibreck (2010) is not explicitly focused on widows but rather on the survivor's politics of memory in Rwanda. According to Edkins in Ibreck (2010) survivors needed to rebuild a different sense of personhood, and so they were driven by the belief that safeguarding the memory of the genocide was an essential step towards political and social transformation in the country.

Winter (1995) and Ibreck (2010) have observed that, in the Western context of the United States and Europe, the root of the contestation over memorials is the tension between survivors and the state. Particularly in the context of the First and Second World War, Winter (1995) contends that memorials were primarily created to mourn and honour the dead, but that they were also employed politically to promote legitimacy or nationalism. Ibreck (2010) reminds us that in societies that have been ravaged by violence and large-scale loss, memory work is first and foremost an expression of grief and a practice of mourning. Often, the state has instrumentalized war and genocide memory to consolidate its power and efforts of nation-building (Winter, 1995; Ibreck, 2010). Often, this is where we position survivors and those who have lost loved ones in the discipline of political studies – instrumentalized in their capacity to bring about a particular kind of nationalism which can be used to promote the legitimacy of those in power, and never for their lived realities which encompass real grief, trauma, and loss.

Bette (2015) articulates this when writing about war widows, and how speeches and pictures from the time following the war are indicative of the ambiguous position that war widows found themselves in. They were sometimes seen by moralists to be a possible source of disorder that could potentially contribute to the military defeat of their respective countries, which holds true in the common thread of the demonisation of and suspicion around widows (Bremmer and van den Bosch, 1995), and by the same coin, there is the expectation for widows to remain faithful to their fallen husbands whilst contributing to the renewal of future generations for the nation.

In their work on Iranian war widows, Zahedi (2006) makes the point that unlike other widows, they bore the additional burden of shouldering the political image projected onto them by the political death of their spouses. At a conceptual level, Bremmer and van den Bosch (1995) argue that the category of widow is characterized by contrasting extremes, such that without direct male guardianship, the widow becomes an anomaly. However, Bette (2015), like Ibreck (2010), asserts that widowed women made these situations work for themselves and exploited their status during the war by using their mourning attire to encourage pacifist ideas.

In Southern Africa, as demonstrated by the work of Durham and Klaits (2002), the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic amidst other forms of violence such as that of apartheid in South Africa, rendered funerals an all too common occurrence. Funerals are said to constitute distinctive public spaces, and as such, are key sites for the exercise of civil conduct, where issues of citizenship can be debated – "distinct from the bureaucratic and rationalizing practices of official nationalism" (Durham and Klaits, 2002: 777). Durham and Klaits (2002) make use of Habermas' conception of the public sphere: where citizens may engage in communicative processes based on a particular view of rationality. However, Durham and Klaits (2002) differ from Habermas regarding the idea that discursive rationality (i.e. the notion that rational communicative action *must* take place within a theory of argumentation [emphasis added]) is necessary to the legitimacy of the nation-state. In this sense, the work of feminist scholar, Iris Marion Young is used to understand the idea that varied forms of communication (i.e. argument, rhetoric, storytelling, and greetings) are key in understanding political space.

Often, in the literature surrounding widowhood, as in the case of Das (1996), Ibreck (2010) and Bette (2015) amongst others, the survivors of war, particularly widowed women, were positioned in terms of their capacity to bring about nation-building. Seemingly, the widow then functions within a liminal position in her life, where she is desired as the virtuous nation-builder, yet ostracised and silenced for her lack of male 'guardianship'. Where widowed women are specifically referred to in Political Science (although this, in and of itself, is not often), it is usually in the context of their relations with the state, and in the work of memory in the memorialisation of their late husbands. The significance of the latter is maintained in present-day Xhosa culture during the process of ukuzila. The section below draws on the

contributions of scholars in anthropology, sociology and psychology; disciplines which dominate the theorization of grief processes and mourning practices.

2.5 Grief processes and mourning practices: A broad overview

Much of the theorization around mourning rites and practices has taken place in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, where scholars such as Danforth (1982), Das (1996), Ngqangweni (2013), and Plancke (2015) among others, have explored ideas around the individual and communal implications of grief. Dominating the enquiry into death rituals and mourning practices are the fields of psychology and anthropology.

Many of those writing in the fields of anthropology and psychology such as Eng, Kazanjian, and Butler (2003); Ngqangweni (2013); Robben (2018); and Taylor (1983) draw on the work of theorists like Sigmund Freud to analyse the work of mourning. In one of his most well-known works, *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud (1917) conceptualises the work of mourning as going beyond the stage of mourning, to a state of melancholia. For Freud (1917), mourning is the reaction to the loss of a loved one, or to the loss of some or other abstraction that has taken the place of a loved one, such as an ideal, liberty, or an object. Melancholia, on the other hand, is described as that which goes beyond mourning – a mourning without end, and the inability to resolve grief and obtain closure (Freud, 1917). Clewell (2004:43) argues that although Freud explains the endlessness of normal grieving, it is not immediately clear how the theory goes beyond melancholy violence, which refers to the internal acts of moral aggression waged in efforts to separate oneself from the loss of the other, to realise an identity unencumbered by the loss of the other and the past, to suggest the "affirmative and ethical aspects of mourning."

In their work, Eng, Kazanjian, and Butler (2003) contextualise the way in which Freud (1917) conceptualises mourning and melancholia to argue that unlike mourning, which can be said to be complete, fully resolved, and in the past; the notion of melancholia suggests that the past remains steadfastly in the present. Benjamin in Eng, Kazanjian and Butler (2003: 4) describes this as being "an ongoing and open relationship with the past". With this understanding, sites of memory and history are generated (Eng, Kazanjian and Butler, 2003). Finally, an important assertion in efforts to understand mourning is that "the work of mourning is

not possible without melancholia" (Eng, Kazanjian and Butler, 2003: 4). This idea becomes a helpful tool in situating the work of mourning in the literature. It provides a site to understand how people's present and future lives interact with the past in "an ongoing and open relationship with the past" when they partake in mourning practices (Eng, Kazanjian and Butler, 2003: 4). Moving forward in this study, and borrowing from Clewell (2004: 43), it is worth imagining then, what "affirmative and ethical aspects of mourning" look like, within the global context of gendered mourning and embodied memory.

Philosophers throughout have been fascinated with the inevitability and finality of death. Different cultures, ethnic groups, and religions have adopted varying outlooks on death, and on whether or not death constitutes the final chapter in one's life, or if it could be viewed as a transition within certain cycles or phases (Eng, Kazanjian and Butler, 2003; Robben, 2018). Writing in the European context, Robben (2018) explains that some historians and philosophers have created death models based on universal ideas and beliefs around death. Historian Philippe Aries did not attempt to isolate any universal truths about death, but rather chose to focus on the transitions in Western European models. Aries (1981) is worth noting because of the influence of his work, *The Hour of Our Death*, as a catalyst for death models in European history (Robben, 2018).

This work moves through the processual nature of death by examining four psychological themes: "people's sense of the individual, the defense of society against the unpredictable forces of nature, the belief in life after death, and the belief in the existence of evil" (Aries in Robben, 2018: 3). Robben (2018) posits that because of their manifestations and historical combinations, these four themes became a catalyst for death models in European history. In the arguments posited by Eng, Kazanjian and Butler (2003) as well as Robben (2018), there is a clear and resounding theme of reverence for the dead, and the need to maintain links to and protect the memory of the dead. When one seeks to evaluate the literature on death, and ideas around dying, this persistent focus on transitions within Western European models proves to be a significant moment in Western literature.

In a study of death rituals in ancient Greece, Danforth (1982) explains that the closer one was to the death in question, the closer to black the colour of one's mourning clothes. Danforth (1982) also clarifies that this was emphasised for women. In the ancient Grecian context, a

variety of factors were at play to present the work of mourning and grief to be 'women's work'. They explain that the number of men present at burials and instances where lamentations needed to be performed and observed was consistently less than that of women. The wearing of black mourning dress for a period of 5 years was upheld for women with greater severity than for men. Men were simply required to wear a lapel pin as a sign of their mourning (Danforth, 1982). Throughout the text, Danforth (1982) highlights the ways in which the study of death yields profound insights into the nature of human life itself. Imagery and public perception become a significant part of how mourning and grief work is enacted. This resounds in the literature of how black mourning dress has shaped the ways in which we perceive the bereaved in society.

2.5.1 The black mourning dress

Lou Taylor (1983) traces the history of mourning dress in Europe and explains that one might think that because grief is a terrible time of pain and loss, society would not have much interest in clothing details. However, more recently, scholars such as Rappaport (2003) have contributed to this literature when tracing English monarch Queen Victoria's period of mourning for her husband during the 1860s – 1870s, and her deliberate choice to wear black clothes in representation of her mourning. Taylor (1983) and Rappaport (2003) demonstrate that mourning dress was not necessarily only a reflection of grief, but of the changes that took place in society. The greater societal implications of mourning dress are accounted for in Whitmore (2017) in the book, *The Changing Culture of Mourning Dress in World War I*. Whitmore writes of the surge in fashionable mourning dress during the period of World War I (WWI), when it was felt that a different expression of grief was required in order to adequately mark the death of a soldier. Simply put, traditional mourning dress was no longer considered to be an appropriate expression of grief that demonstrated respect and the memorialisation of those who had died a noble death, fighting for their country (Whitmore, 2017). As a result, as demonstrated both by Taylor (1983) and more recently, by Whitmore (2017), mourning dress instituted a culture. For example, the fashion pages of magazines such as *The Queen*, *The Gentlewoman*, and *The Lady's Pictorial* became a site for advice – where their readership of middle- and upper-class women could keep up with the latest trends.

Buitelaar, in Bremmer and van den Bosch (1995), also explains the parallels between the attire of early Christian nuns and widows i.e. that neither group of women took an interest in

elegant and stylish garments, with the societal imperative of hiding their feminine figure. The early Christian mourning dress customs had a defeminizing effect on women, and a link is drawn between this, and the Hindu widows of some Brahmin castes where widows took leave of their femininity by shaving their heads. “Widows despecified in this way were no longer referred to as ‘she’ but as ‘it’” (Bremmer and van den Bosch, 1995: 13). This allows us to see the nuanced ways in which widowhood affected women’s identities. A relationship is seen between women’s varying socio-economic positions at the time, and how one’s privilege afforded them the ability to define black mourning dress for fashion and hyper-visibility, whilst the same mourning dress had a defeminizing effect for those who did not hold the same privilege.

This literature demonstrates the rich history of mourning dress and the ways in which the beliefs around and the strict adherence to it differed along class, religious, and social lines. The gendered dynamic of mourning dress posited by Taylor (1983) has informed much of the literature (Brown, 2007; Magudu 2004; Rappaport, 2003, among others) that argues that a study of mourning and death provides a study source that transcends all class barriers and clearly reflects the role of women in society.

2.5.2 Women and grief work: silence and speech

In the global South, much theorization on mourning has taken place in places such as South Asia and China. Anthropologist Veena Das, has extensively researched the South Asian context, specifically the Punjabi people of India and Pakistan (Das 1984, 1996, 2006). Much like the literature on grief and mourning in the European context, Das also positions her work on grief, pain, and mourning within the context of violence and war, namely, against the background of the Partition of India in 1947 and the assassination of then prime minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 (Das, 2006). This creates a context whereby “the story of lives enmeshed in violence is part of the story of the nation” (Das, 2006:2).

In her 1996 work, *Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain*, Das writes of the birth of India as a nation free from colonial domination as a simultaneous scene of unprecedented collective violence. This violence took place in a context where rape was used as a weapon of war, and many women were abducted. Das poses the question of what happens to the work of mourning in the context of war and social violence, when women who were violated

and rejected may be said to be occupying a zone that is not between life and death, but rather between two deaths. Das (1996) suggests that the notion of grief is represented as bodily pain, and the female body as the one that will carry this pain within them forever. This notion reminds one of Freud (1917) and the endlessness of mourning. Das' work shows that the memory of such violent events is folded into ongoing and future social relationships, and thus "individual lives are defined by context, but they are also generative of new contexts" (2006: 64).

In their work on the problems and challenges facing widows in India, Dasgupta (2017) explains that recent research in India has ignored younger widows as well as those who do not head households. Using Paulo Freire's 1993 work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Dasgupta (2017) explains that widows have been victims of a patriarchal system, without challenging it, and that this has created a culture of silence which then perpetuates their oppression. Dasgupta (2017) goes on to argue that the experience of such oppression puts one in a position that denies them of their critical awareness, in ways that prevent them from responding to their situations and even leaves them lacking the basic vocabulary to expose their oppression. This narrative of victimhood and a lack of agency is one which persists in the general literature on global mourning practices (George, 2013).

However, Das (1996, 2006) complicates this notion by explaining that there was a zone of silence surrounding the experiences of the Partition and the time thereafter, when it came to the women narrating their experiences, because that silence in and of itself, served as a means of protection for the women. Das clarifies when saying that "this silence was achieved either by the use of language that was general and metaphoric but that evaded specific description of any events so as to capture the particularity of their experience, or by describing the surrounding events but leaving the actual experience of abduction and rape unstated" (1996: 84). The women did this because it was dangerous to remember, with the memories often compared to poison (Das, 1996). The zone of silence served to protect the women once they were brought back to their families since the violations of their bodies were never made public (Das, 1996). Das (1996: 88) makes the point that often, the impulse is to "give voice to the voiceless", but "we may end by using our capacity to "unearth" hidden facts as a weapon". This further inflicts violence.

Drawing on the work of Das, Motsemme (2004) argues for the need to move away from Western oppositional hierarchies of speech and silence, and adopt frameworks whereby modes of expression such as words, silence, tears, gestures, and dreams exist interdependently and within the same interpretive field. It is within this framework where "we find that the mute always speak" (Motsemme, 2004: 910). Ross (2003), Motsemme (2004), and Russell (2008) draw from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to make a case for the complexities of silences, finding voice, and being heard, for the women who testified at the TRC after having experienced large scale loss and violence during the apartheid era in South Africa. Often, when the women spoke at the TRC, they did not centre their own experiences of violence, nor did they centre their own roles in the liberation movement. Rather, they often spoke about abuses inflicted on their male relatives - their sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers (McEwan, 2003).

> Individuals who speak of the intimate effects of suffering make use of styles that may – and often do – break with conventional narrative framings. They frequently speak from subject positions that are not ordinarily endowed with power and in so doing take risks that may not be immediately apparent to scholars (Ross, 2003: 337).

Segalo (2014) brought this assertion to life in her research, which makes use of embroidery as narrative. In the study, a group of black South African women depict their experiences of suffering and healing and their narratives of apartheid trauma using embroidery. Following Ross' (2003) assertion, these women broke with conventional narrative framings through the use of embroidery to provide a space for counter-narratives where they can "move from the position of spectatorship to authors and creators of their own narratives" (Segalo, 2014:46). A fixation on the Western oppositional hierarchies of speech and silence would enable the erasure of these narratives.

Benya (2015) also alerts us to the complexities of narrative framing in their work, writing of the role of women at the Marikana Commission. The role of the women of Marikana is often erased because they are not included in the narrative of who could have physically been present at the strike, and by extension, who could have experienced violence and lost their lives at the Marikana massacre. However, Benya (2015) alerts us to the fact that these women were engaged in the struggle at a political level. Labelling their roles as strictly domestic or supportive misses the intricacies of the classed struggles, and the interaction that black women had and continue to

have as the invisible labour force of Marikana. Despite their erasure, the women of Marikana played an additional key role when giving their testimonies at the Marikana Commission. It was the women who attended the Commission in their numbers when some men were back at work, and others were injured and unable to attend. At the Commission, the women humanized the deceased and injured by naming them and telling the stories of the dreams and goals that they had for their families, as human beings – outside of being numbered labourers for capitalist gains (Kros, 2017). This is yet another part of the undeniable grief work that women continue to do, particularly in terms of memorialising spectacular violence. Much of what we know about those injured or those who had lost their lives in Marikana, is because of the real-life narratives told by the women.

When highlighting the ideas surrounding the question of who does the work of mourning in society, Das (1996) also draws parallels between the mourning laments recorded in Greece by Danforth, in that the grammar used in those laments is the same grammar used in Punjabi laments. The grammar of the laments show a mimicry between the body and language, where the lament itself positions the female body as the carrier of grief (Das, 1996). These similarities illuminated by Das (1996) points out the ways in which expressions and experiences of grief are similar across the globe. The point behind these expressions of grief are explained in Das (1996), in that the interaction between acoustic, linguistic, and corporeal orientations give public definition to a 'good death', and thus distinguishes it from a 'bad death'. Lamentations and the presence of women who perform the work of mourning signals a 'good death', and silence and the absence of witnesses signals a 'bad death'. As can be seen in this context and others: "in the course of everyday life men dominate the public domain in terms of control over speech, but in the case of death they become mute" (Das, 1996: 81). These works ultimately provide a thread (historical and present) of the undeniable work done by women in shaping public definitions of death and memory.

2.5.3 Mourning and filial piety

In the context of early China, Brown (2007: 2) makes the point that "mourning practices served to inculcate the young with proper reverence for ancestors, parents, and ultimately state authority". Both Kutcher (1999) and Brown (2007) make a case for the ways in which mourning,

and the observances of its practices became one of the ultimate measures of filial piety. Filial piety is considered a virtue of respect towards one's parents, elders, as well as one's ancestors. A tenet based on Confucian and Chinese Buddhist ethics (Kutcher, 1999). The importance of filial piety as the linchpin of the Qing state rings true in Kutcher (1999) and Brown (2007), when motivating for the use of mourning as a tool through which to look at political life. Through mourning, elite men would employ values of filial piety in order "to create alliances and signal political values, as well as to establish reputations for personal virtue" (Brown, 2007: 6). Therefore, the importance of mourning practices as a way of denoting political and social being and life in early China, is reiterated throughout Kutcher (1999) and Brown (2007) amongst others.

While the concept of filial piety is mainly explicitly used in the literature within the context of Chinese society, it may be useful to draw from this concept, with regard to the societal imperatives tied to widow's observing certain practices and behaviours, for the purposes of displaying respect and reverence towards their own families, their in-laws, and their deceased husbands. The work of Vellem (2010) on human dignity, allows us to understand that dignity from a black African perspective is sought through the interconnectedness of human beings, the whole of creation, as well as a 'life-force' that emanates from the ancestors. The ancestors are the 'living' dead, in that the relationship between the living and the dead is a fluid one, wherein communication and bonds with one's ancestors may be nurtured. This allows us to see that in the African world sense, one's personal virtue and dignity are intricately linked to one's relations with others, which include the ancestors. Therefore, living in harmony with the living is as important as living in harmony with the dead. As explored in the following section, many of the observances of widowhood are seemingly practiced for the purposes of avoiding suspicion, or for the protection of the widow against bad luck that may befall her should she not observe these practices to their fullest extent, because of this very belief in a life-force that emanates from the ancestors (Sossou, 2002).

2.5.4 Widow suspicion

Writing about the Nigerian context in *Widowhood and Nigerian womanhood: Another context of gendered poverty in Nigeria*, Genyi (2013) explains that the level of education and economic

status of the widow determine the degree of the application or enforcement of the practices that are culturally associated with widowhood. Genyi (2013), much like other scholars on the continent such as Sossou (2002) and Ndlovu (2016), highlight that it is usually believed that the woman is the person responsible for the death of her husband. As a result, the practices which occur around the time of the burial and in the mourning period are designed to elicit remorse, impose punishment on the woman as the assumed perpetrator, and to ultimately purify the widow as it is believed that every death is unnatural.

In the Southern African context of Botswana, the widow's in-laws purchase a mourning outfit for her which she wears for a year, which is usually black, but can also be blue or green in the case of her being a member or attendee of a 'church of the spirit' (i.e. The Pentecostal Church) (Durham and Klaits, 2002). Widows' dress also provokes speculation about hidden motives, i.e. those who refuse to go into mourning may be suspected to have killed their husbands for their resources, and this is the case for those who wear blue as well (Durham and Klaits, 2002). This demonstrates a clear transnational pattern of widow's operating under the suspicion of being responsible for their husbands' deaths, whether they observe the mourning practices to their strictest extent or not. Whether it is under the suspicion of being responsible for their husband's demise (Durham and Klaits, 2002; Genyi, 2013; Ndlovu, 2016), or under the suspicion of sexual promiscuity and needing a male partner to regulate their sexuality (Bremmer and van den Bosch, 1995; Dasgupta, 2017); widows' lives are seemingly under a microscope of never-ending suspicion.

To better understand the gendered dynamic inherent in the work of mourning in the African context, it is important to examine the literature on the work of marriage. Widows often bear the burden of demonstrating a heightened visibility in their mourning, and are ultimately more disadvantaged as a result of mourning practices – more so than those who are girl-children in the family through direct kinship, as can be seen in the work of scholars such as Ewelukwa (2002); Nyanzi, Emodu-Walakira, and Serwaniko (2009); Kotze, Els, and Rajuili-Masilo (2012); Manala (2015). The work of mourning indicates useful information about the work of conjugal relationships, and how these ties continue to persist in the day-to-day lives of widowed women long after the mourning period.

2.6 Widowhood and Everyday Citizenship

Having evaluated the literature on where it is that widows are usually located in the discipline of Political Studies, and the gendered grief work performed by women, it then necessitates that we understand widows not only in the spectacular moments of violence in war and conflict, but also in the nuanced experiences of everyday life.

As will be clarified in the chapters to come, widowhood as a life period and identity for many women is negotiated through various meanings. In a study of Ghanaian Akan widows for example, the theoretical framework of resilience is used along with the importance of spirituality and religion, to argue that many widows attribute their survival and functioning first and foremost to spirituality (Korang-Okrah, 2015). This importance placed on religion has been documented in other studies of Akan widows, including Neil and Kahn (1999) and Hodge and Derezotes (2008). For the Akan widows, spiritual and religious beliefs were an important source of resilience when facing the challenges of bereavement and customary laws. Cattell (2003) explains widowhood as a sociocultural construction. The experiences of African widows grow out of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts of African marriage and women's roles as wives (Cattell, 2003). This lends weight to the importance of beginning this chapter with a theoretical understanding of the work of marriage in African society.

Fasanmi-Ayivor (2020) makes a distinction between a widow and widowhood by explaining that a widow is a woman who has lost her spouse or partner by death and has usually not remarried, while widowhood is the state of a person losing a spouse or a person with whom she cohabits through death and remaining unmarried. For those women who are the main source of support for their households; as is often the case, widowhood is then not an economic problem (Cattell, 2003). Cattell (2003) goes on to make the argument that in fact, for some women, widowhood marks a permanent status of independence that is preferable to remarrying.

To explain this theoretically, the African feminist conceptualisation of matrifocality – i.e. centring the mother as the head of the household or family – may be useful in examining the impacts of these notions on the present-day socioeconomic context. Amadiume (1987) and Oyewumi (1997) show that matrifocality is also present in the South African context, as seen in the ways that one's womanhood is dependent on her industriousness in running an independent household. Amadiume (1987: 19) argues that there is a presence of a "matricentric structure in

all our varied societies," which provides a framework to make sense of gender relations which are matrifocal (Adesina, 2010). Matrifocality is underpinned by the fact that there is a "dialectical relationship between the production unit and relations of production" (Amadiume, 1987: 18). These relations of production are rooted in the ideology of common motherhood.

The theory of matrifocality helps us to centre the importance of building an independent homestead, and the tenets of ukukhuthala (industriousness) that are emphasised in the understanding of what makes a good woman, or good mother. I use matrifocality to illustrate the idea that even in the presence of patrilineage, widowhood is often not an economic problem for many women, because it is women's industriousness which ensures provision for the home and builds the homestead. Clark (2000) writes of the economic implications of mothering amongst the urban Asante of Ghana. The argument is made that amongst the Asante, motherhood is tightly linked with work, not in a self-indulgent sense, but rather in ways that signal unselfish maternal devotion in meeting their children's financial needs in order to successfully raise a child to adulthood. The ability to ensure provision for one's children becomes a key factor for the creation of sustainable livelihoods. Motsemme (2011) makes use of the concept of 'ukuphanta' or 'ukuphanda', which may be translated to mean 'hustle' in English. Motsemme's work demonstrates the ways in which South African township mothers and daughters create a sense of life that is worth living and celebrating. Through 'hustling', these women "build an alternative experience of humanity, of participation in society, of citizenship" (Motsemme, 2011:118).

Using the theory of matrifocality in highlighting the intricate link between industriousness and good womanhood and motherhood, allows one to see how women's daily activities of industriousness translate into their experiences of participation in society, long after their partners have passed on. This will be engaged further in Chapter Five of the study.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter sought to provide the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of this study and locate the study within the greater literature on death studies, citizenship studies, as well as African feminist theory. The chapter argued that in order to conceptualise claims to widowhood, it is important to understand the work of marriage in African society, and the contextually significant values that are attached to the meanings of good womanhood and good wifehood.

Through an understanding of notions such as ukuhlonipha and ukukhuthala, it was understood that markers of what makes a good woman, are not discarded during the time of widowhood. In fact, the ways in which women bargain for respect and dignity in their demonstrations of ukuhlonipha and ukukhuthala, are the same values that are galvanized for respect and autonomy during the time of widowhood, as the section on 'Widowhood and Everyday Citizenship' showed.

Once the context of the work of marriage was illustrated, the chapter also provided an argument for the ways in which the state itself has based its nation-building rhetoric on the nuclear family and how it functions within the public-private dichotomy. Through this rhetoric, it was demonstrated that national projects of memory-making and memorialisation are also created, through the use of women as the embodiments of memory. Much of where we locate the widow as a figure in the discipline of Political Studies relies on those moments in which war and large-scale violence devastate nations. The literature often places widows solely within the moments of the spectacular, and as extensions of the project of memorialisation, rather than locating them in the everyday navigations of their lives.

The elements of heightened visibility, navigating spaces under constant suspicion of having been responsible for their husband's demise, and the social norm of silences during the mourning period which prevents widows from speaking in defence of themselves, demonstrates the multiple contradictions that widows find themselves operating under. Amidst all the societal expectations, widows are still expected to emerge as the public embodiment of one's husband's memory. Their (in)access to status and resources as a result of their widowhood, as well as their own self-definitions of their womanhood, widowhood, and notions of belonging, are the main themes that will be explored in the remainder of this study.

Chapters Four and Five of the study will demonstrate even further, the arguments posited surrounding contentious claims to widowhood, as well as the ways in which widows formulate conceptions of belonging for themselves and their children within their homesteads and communities, by bargaining for and maintaining their dignity and respect in various ways.

Chapter 3

"Nakuya kokwenu!" (There is your home!) - Going home, finding homes, and coming to know

3.1 Introduction

My entry-point into this research is through my mother, Nomvuyiseko, whom I regard as a site of knowledge and a point of reference in my life. I have always known that being a widow was a part of my mother's life, but I had never quite understood what it was about her having lost her husband – and us having lost our father – that had altered her life for years to come. Growing up, I had many questions about the ways that I saw my mother's life unfold. It was a constant site of wonder for me how she fashioned a life for herself and for her children, as a single parent. I thought it was awe-inspiring how there was always a solution, and a plan for the problem around the corner. As my mother and I grew closer, I began to see that what looked like awe-inspiring solutions were in fact the result of toilsome labour that was hidden from the eyes of others.

Returning to my hometown of East London to conduct my fieldwork in September of 2020, in the year that marked the 20th anniversary of my father's death, felt like a full circle moment for me. Returning home made me come face to face with the ongoing nature of grief and mourning work. Regardless of time, there may never truly be a definitive moment where one can say kugqityiwe – it is finished. I saw with fresh eyes, now as a 'researcher', the visible ways that my father's memory had been inscribed in our household. In our home hangs a worn photograph, that time has clearly had its way with, of my father smiling gleefully and crouching next to a full and green bush. The photo is comical and classic in its reminder of how this pose was all the rage in their generation's photographs. Next to his, hangs a photograph of my mother, beautiful and almost stoic, in her work uniform. Although we have moved houses many times, without fail and almost as an unspoken rule of law, these photographs would resurface, and be placed next to each other each time. Much of what I became interested in then, were the somewhat unspoken yet visible cues of how society comes to memorialise the passing of their loved ones, and who embodies this memorialisation.

This chapter begins by tracing the interview process, and what 'going home' may demonstrate for feminist research when identifying sources of knowledge in our societies; the research sites of the study; research design and the interview process; iziduko (clan names) as everyday memory work; the complexities of insider-outsider research; the limitations of the research and lastly, my decision to use thematic analyses.

3.2 Identifying and locating sources of knowledge

What we know and how we come to know what we know, is laden with history and meaning. Baderoon (2007: 277) contends that 'methodology' as a term is often "burdened with scientific weight". The ways in which research has been conducted has often been distant and far-removed from the subjects of the research itself. Drawing from May (2001), Alweendo (2017) argues that social scientists tended to pursue a positivist paradigm in academic research for many years, following the perceived need to emulate the rigour of the sciences such as chemistry and physics. This scientific rigour was constructed such that objectivity, the desire to uncover generalisable laws of human behaviour, as well as the assumption that the researcher is detached from their topic of investigation, were at the fore. In her article, *Methodologies: silences, secrets, fragments*, Baderoon (2007: 277) proposes that our view of methodology has shifted in order for us to view it as "the philosophical and practical orientation of the project, the *angle of the gaze* that is manifested in the thesis, arising out of and modulated by the material under study".

Drawing from Baderoon (2007) and her proposition, it becomes important for researchers to consider with all seriousness and sincerity, the impact of their methodological decisions on the overall orientation of the project. These decisions need to be modulated by the material of the study. Although this study made use of qualitative research methods, namely semi-structured in-depth interviews, the process of conducting interviews revealed itself to be one which requires an explanation beyond these terms. The women interviewed provided key insights for the study, and the act of returning home and drawing from these insights was a complex, albeit fulfilling process.

3.2.1 Research sites and abakhaphi

This research took place in two main areas in the Eastern Cape: East London (Amalinda, Tsholomnqa and Mdantsane) and Qonce (Dimbaza, Magcumeni, and KwaNonkcampa). Fourteen widows were interviewed from these areas. These areas were the geographical site of this study because these are the areas where I grew up. This was also where my mother, Nomvuyiseko Jimlongo, and my aunt, Nompinda Qakala, had formed networks of their own. It is through these networks with women that they had known as young girls in school, with distant family friends, and with women they had formed friendships with at church and within the community, that I was able to gain participants for this study. These women were my mother's and my aunts' peers and as such, were elderly women residing mainly in the township and rural areas of East London and Qonce.

Many of the participants' ages are not specified because the question of age was not one that was explicitly asked during the interview[2]. The biographical questions that were asked related to where they were from, where they were born, and their views on marriage and related concepts. Some of the participants did, however, divulge the year in which they were born in the course of the conversation. Below is a table with the details of the women interviewed.

Name	Location	Age
1. MaNcobeni	Magcumeni, Qonce	62
2. MamGqwashu	Dimbaza, Qonce	Not Disclosed
3. MaBhayi	Magcumeni, Qonce	72
4. MamCirha	Magcumeni, Qonce	59
5. MamBhele	KwaNonkcampa, Qonce	74
6. MamDlangathi	Tsholomnqa, East London	Not Disclosed
7. MaSukude	Tsholomnqa, East London	53
8. MaRadebe	Tsholomnqa, East London	Not Disclosed
9. MaNdala	Tsholomnqa, East London	Not Disclosed
10. MaMngwevu	Tsholomnqa, East London	Not Disclosed

[2] While the question of age was not asked explicitly, the women interviewed were elderly women above the age of 50. This was expected because participants were sourced from my mother and aunt's existing networks, and were thus their peers. Chapter Four of this study indicates that women who were widowed at a relatively young age, such as MaNcobeni for example, who was widowed at the age of 34, still choose to remain at their marital homesteads for reasons of bargaining for dignity and respect within their homesteads and communities. It must be noted that age at one's time of widowhood appeared to be less of a determining factor than 'good' motherhood and choosing to remain rooted at the homestead, for the women in this study. This is explained in detail in Chapter Four and Five of this study. However, it could be useful for future studies to gain the perspectives of presently younger widows, and whether or not their experiences of widowhood have been different to the older participants in this study, who had been widowed for many years prior to their participation in the study.

11. MamJwarha	Tsholomnqa, East London	Not Disclosed
12. MaZikhali	Amalinda, East London	Not Disclosed
13. MaJola	Mdantsane, East London	Not Disclosed
14. MaSkhosana	Mdantsane, East London	Not Disclosed
15. Dr Nomfundo Mali, WEP	Cape Town	Not Disclosed

Figure 3.1: Table detailing locations and pseudonyms of participants

Throughout the process of my fieldwork, I was accompanied by my mother and my aunt. This work was a collaborative effort between them, the research participants, and myself. I was accompanied by my mother and aunt to make my participants feel more at ease, although my mother and aunt were not present for the one-on-one interview itself. This idea of never being alone throughout the process of fieldwork reminded me of Milisuthando Bongela's article titled *We are not meant to be alone*, wherein she underlines the importance placed on ukukhatshwa – being accompanied in isiNtu (Xhosa tradition) (2018). In moments of joy, and sadness, to be in community with one another has been an age-old bedrock of our society. One maintains "strong communities, so that ube nomntu wokukhapha [you have someone to accompany you]" (Bongela, 2018). The work that both my mother and my aunt undertook in being co-researchers with me, made visible the ways in which without ukukhatshwa, I would have never gained the kind of access I did into the homes and lives of my participants. Ngcobozi (2017) also underlies the role that her grandmother, Nosicelo Ndlovu, played in being a co-researcher with her. It goes without saying that in African feminist work, one may identify themselves as the researcher, but much of the access that one gains to knowledge is through being in community with others.

In addition to the 14 widows interviewed in these areas, Dr Nomfundo Mali of the Widows Empowerment Programme (WEP) in Cape Town was also interviewed. Dr Mali was not issued a pseudonym because her identity as the founder of the WEP is publicly known. It was important to interview Dr Mali as the founder of the WEP, to gain perspectives of the work that entities such as NGOs or communal programs do to help widows navigate their everyday lives. Although the WEP is involved in providing widows all over the country with support, their physical work takes place in Cape Town. As a result, this interview took place online, via Zoom, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 was a significant factor during the time of

this research. However, it was ensured that all safety measures and protocols were adhered to, in order to ensure the protection and health of those involved in the study.

3.3 Research design and the interview process

Hesse-Biber (2014: 3) explains that research may be considered as feminist research when it is "grounded in the set of theoretical traditions that privilege women's issues, voices, and lived experiences." Using Reinharz (1992), Hesse-Biber (2007) makes note of the ways in which feminist researchers make use of in-depth interviews in order to gain access to women's hidden knowledges i.e. their ideas, thoughts, and memories, in their own words rather than those of the researcher. Hesse-Biber (2007) also guides us to be aware of the ways in which sampling of the data takes place. For the purposes of this research, interviews with the 14 widows who participated were conducted face to face. One interview, with Dr Nomfundo Mali, the founder of the Widows Empowerment Programme (WEP) was conducted online via Zoom meeting.

The set of questions for Dr Mali and the widows differed, and can be seen in Appendix A and B. The questions posed to Dr Mali pertained to the organisational aims, practices, and goals of the programme. Conversely, the questions posed to the 14 widows pertained to their experiences of marriage, mourning practices, and widowhood. These were questions which were personal in nature and necessitated face to face interviewing. Hesse-Biber (2007: 119) notes that face to face interviewing gives the researcher access to "visual and verbal cues, such as gestures and eye contact". As a result, the global COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a delay of much of the fieldwork process, as it required that I only proceed once all those involved could participate safely. Interviews took place in participants' homes, having adhered to all COVID-19 protocols.

The in-depth interview created an environment to explore the topic, through the research questions, and the information provided by the interview participants. The interview process began with background questions related to where and how the participants grew up, and their understandings of marriage during these times. This initial communication often opened up the conversation, creating a relaxed environment where the participants felt at ease when talking to me. The emotive nature of the conversation, and the depth of information I obtained, was made possible by the probing yet flexible nature of the semi-structured in-depth interview process.

My conversations with the research participants were held in IsiXhosa, as this is the language spoken by the women I interviewed. My interview with Dr Mali was a mixture of English and IsiXhosa. We both found ourselves code switching often. I found that language played a key factor in how I was received in the field. My ability to speak IsiXhosa eliminated a barrier between myself and the research participants, and allowed them to speak freely and in much greater detail without the limitations of the English language. The process of asking my questions in IsiXhosa was made easier by the fact that a reviewer of the Rhodes University Ethical Clearance Committee insisted that I translate my questions and consent forms into IsiXhosa. This allowed me to seek advice from a peer, Zikho Dana, who is doing a Masters in African Languages (IsiXhosa) with a Joint Honours in African Languages and Political and International Studies[3]. This process meant that I avoided a situation where I would be translating the questionnaire on the spot, and allowed me time to think about the complexities of translation.

Dlakavu (2017) argues that while communicating with your participants in their preferred language brings about a sense of comfort and deeper understanding, it also brings about complication in the process of translation as there is a danger of meanings getting lost. As the person writing this research, I am aware of the kind of power that I possess in interpreting and inferring meaning on the data collected. However, as part of conducting the research ethically, and staying true to the aims of centring the knowledge provided by the research participants, it becomes an ethical imperative to ensure that the initial intent behind the statement stays intact during the process of translating from one language to another (Dlakavu, 2017). For my translation process, this meant consulting with my peer, Zikho Dana (mentioned above), who assisted me in instances where I was unsure. I also listened to the interview recordings attentively, taking note of some of the emotive or contextual cues which give meaning to many IsiXhosa terms. For example, as will be noted in Chapter Four of the study, the term ‘umfazi’ was used by participants to refer to either a ‘woman’ or a ‘wife’ in certain instances. This required that I pay attention to context.

Similar to Ngcobozi (2017), I found that the interview process took place with relative ease because the participants were somewhat taken aback by the fact that someone took interest

[3] Zikho Dana is also the departmental translator in the Department of Political and International Studies. Dana has translated all undergraduate course outlines, and some examination papers from English into IsiXhosa as part of the department’s trans-languaging efforts.

in listening to their life stories. Some participants would express that they found the process therapeutic. Many shared with me intimate details that may have not been shared with others, due to beliefs of needing to keep matters and experiences of one's household to themselves. Upon reflection, I realised that much of these conversations were, in the simplest sense, moments of storytelling.

3.4 Going home, finding homes: Iziduko as everyday memory work

Embarking on fieldwork was a home-going for me in many ways. Whenever I would reach one home, the identifying question of "ungu Ma mni?" loosely translated to "to which clan do you belong?" would inevitably come up. These questions required ukuzithutha (reciting my clan names). Having done so, I would be met with an enthusiastic "nakuya kokwenu!" (there is your home!) and be pointed in the direction of the homesteads that were home to ooMasthathu in the area. Laden in the idea of ukuzithutha, is that of ukuzilanda. While ukuzilanda may refer to a variety of practices and rituals amongst amaXhosa, particularly in the event of death. Loosely translated into English, this can be said to be the practice of fetching oneself. More than this, it can be about "connecting oneself to the past in the present moment" (Masola, 2020: 136). When I was asked to ukuzithutha, I was being asked to ukuzilanda. To name those in my ancestry so that the women would know who I am, where I come from, and to whom I belonged. For my participants to trust me with their stories, I needed to know who I was. When I would be pointed in the direction of the homesteads of ooMasthathu in the village, I was ultimately being pointed to a site of belonging. To situate me within a familiarity with my clan, also aided my insider positionality.

Iziduko is a key site of tracing belonging and genealogies. During this process, I had not only returned home, but had found homes as well. Home then, is not simply a result of biological belonging, but may also be traced through iziduko. The significance of which has been passed down through the embodied knowledge of ooMakhulu. Like the work of Tisani (1998) and Magoqwana (2018) show us, uMakhulu can almost instinctively point you in the direction of where your shared ancestry resides.

Baderoon (2007: 279) outlines the ways in which the premise of the archive is to tell an "official story of the past" and confer validation on this story of the past. At their core, archives "claim completeness, and as such, the actual configuration of an archive reveals the 'configurations of power' that it serves". Drawing from the work of Bheki Peterson, wherein it is suggested that these archives are 'stored in the stubborn memories of people, in suitcases and plastic bags under beds, in wardrobes and in ceilings, the argument is made for a reconfiguration of the archive (Baderoon, 2007). This requires a shift in our conceptions of what sites of knowledge look like and scholars such as Magoqwana (2018) have foregrounded this work. Many of the women I held conversations with were elderly women, whom I considered to be ooMakhulu. In *Repositioning uMakhulu as an Institution of Knowledge,* Magoqwana (2018) deliberately makes use of the term 'uMakhulu' in lieu of the English term 'grandmother' (which is usually used to refer to the biological extended family member), to make the statement that uMakhulu as an identity, pushes back against the use of imposed categories that simply do not fit our local contexts. Goduka (2012: 1) explains that "the basic component of a rural community's knowledge system is its indigenous knowledge". Embedded within these indigenous knowledges are components that form the basis of a people's ethnic identity, self-respect, as well as cultural virtues that are based on notions of ubuntu (Goduka, 2012). Iziduko, as Goduka (2012) notes; forms part of these components that encompass indigenous knowledge. I wish to draw from Magoqwana's (2018) epistemic intervention to position the women's stories, as well as their ability to point me in the direction of my homes, as acts of living memory.

uMakhulu is often erroneously dubbed as an 'unproductive body' due to biological reductionism, but, as Chapter Four of the study also demonstrates, ooMakhulu have long constructed livelihoods for themselves despite the state's false narrative of a sole dependence on social welfare (Magoqwana, 2018). Important in Magoqwana's work however, is how "it is the sessions around the fire, at the end of each day, that provided an opportunity for learning by the youth from the grandmother that served as a foundation for historical knowledge and igniting the imagination of the young" (2018: 82). One image that remains etched in my mind during a visit to a participant's home in Tsholomnqa on the outskirts of East London, was how uMakhulu uMaNdala and I, sat cross-legged on the grass, shielded from the harsh rays of the sun by this big tree that was no doubt a landmark of this homestead. A far cry from the cold, ivory towers of the

University institution from which I came. uMaNdala sat with me and began to tell me ibali lakhe- her story.

Magoqwana draws from Tisani (1998) in theorizing uMakhulu as a "foundation of knowledge". Laying the methodological grounding of this thesis on the notion of uMakhulu, is thus a move to re-centre the "invisible knowledges that have contributed to how we know what we know" (Magoqwana, 2018: 83). Both Magoqwana and Tisani's work focus on the embodied knowledge of uMakhulu, who provides historical education through iziduko (clan names) and ukuzithutha (reciting one's genealogies). The significance of iziduko in IsiXhosa became a striking factor in this research.

Prior to the interviews, it was agreed that the anonymity of participants would be protected, due to the personal and intimate nature of this research. Some of the information shared were reflective of experiences within communities and families, and so for the protection of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned. In an effort to recognise the role played by ooMama, not only in the information provided, but their influence in modulating some of the methodological decisions of this study, each participant was assigned isiduko that was not their own, instead of a random assignment of pseudonyms. This is also in recognition of the significance that iziduko have in terms of the genealogical histories that they carry, the connections that they fashion amongst the living and those who have passed on, as well as the access that my own clan name gave me in my research sites.

The use of my clan name as an identifier, in addition to who I was as a researcher, was also an entry point into my 'insider' identity within the research, and the ways in which my participants felt as though they could comfortably communicate with me. Additionally, the use of iziduko expands beyond a methodological decision, but is also an epistemological contribution. In understanding that iziduko is a privileged mode of identifying people, more than one's surname in the African world sense; it is also possible to see one of the ways that the women in the study have been able to nurture wider forms of community in their everyday lives.

3.4.1 'Insider-outsider' positionality: reconciling being umntwana and researcher

Negotiating the complexities of my positionality within the research is something that I spent a considerable amount of time doing. Hesse-Biber (2014) explains the importance of reflexivity in feminist research, and the need for the researcher to account for how their social background, location, and assumptions can influence the research. I had initially felt disconnected from identifying myself as a 'researcher' because I felt as though I had a sense of familiarity with what I was researching. I had seen widowhood unfold right before my eyes, and I had felt its impact. Mohoto (2017) refers to this as Insider positionality. "A terminology used to refer to the phenomenon of being privy to the community in which one is a researcher" (Mohoto, 2017: 14). This was the case for me, as a young black woman, raised by a widowed woman. Mohoto (2017) argues that the insider positionality lends one to inside knowledge, but it also opens one up to potential biases. Mohoto (2017: 15) notes that the insider-outsider positionality has been a constant site of contention, because it is "a false dichotomy since outsiders and insiders have to contend with similar methodological issues around positionality, a researcher's sense of self, and the situated knowledge she/he possesses as a result of her/his location in the social order".

However, I realised that my discomfort with the 'researcher' identity was because this identity was in constant interaction with my identity as umntwana [a young child] in relation to my participants. My return home made me aware of just how much in the African world sense, this researcher identity that I initially felt so preoccupied with, paled in comparison to my identity as umntwana in relation to the women that I interviewed. In a seminar at the Political and International Studies Department at Rhodes University, Kholeka Shange (2020) makes use of the term 'umntwana', to intellectualise the conceptual meaning of this term in isiZulu. Shange (2020) uses 'umntwana' to refer to Princess Magogo kaDinuzulu, the late prolific musician and Zulu princess, as "umntwana uMagogo". She does this to use a concept that is contextually significant and makes the point that in everyday life, those who are of royalty amongst AmaZulu, would be referred to as "abantwana" (Shange, 2020). Therefore, when one would ordinarily connote 'umntwana' to mean 'child' in the general sense, this is not the case in the Zulu world sense. Referring to one as 'umntwana' does not infantilise the person, nor does it limit it to age (Shange, 2020). The concept of 'umntwana' therefore, is a contentious one where understandings of the term differ, particularly amongst IsiXhosa and isiZulu speakers. It was also noted in the seminar that although the term is commonly used to refer to a young child in present-day spoken

language amongst amaXhosa, it in fact was used prior to colonial influence, to refer to "the one that is most loved" (Zikho Dana in Shange, 2020). In this sense, the use of this term in this study becomes similar to the ways in which Shange (2020) makes use of it.

My use of umntwana is therefore not to infantilise my role within the research, but to give credence to the humility that this research required me to have, and to recognise the complex nature of black women's interactions with other black women, due to seniority. As both Magoqwana (2018) and Maseko (2018) write in *Whose History Counts: Decolonising African Pre-colonial Historiography*; the social hierarchy of Xhosa society is constructed through seniority rather than gender. This is how I understood my 'insider' positionality, such that I was first and foremost received as umntwana. This did not take away from the researcher identity but was in constant interaction with it. During and after conversations with my participants, I would often be asked whether my questions had been answered to my satisfaction because they wanted to ensure that I would do well in this project. To them, I was not a distant figure who came to ask them questions, but I was rather 'umntwana' who needed to do well in capturing the data to collect rich findings for the thesis. It felt as if ooMakhulu that I interviewed became invested in my education success as one of their children in the community whom they wanted to see succeeding.

Much like Shai (2020), who drew from personal and research experience of interacting with elders in conducting GBV and HIV/AIDS related research with women in Mpondoland in the Eastern Cape; I was mindful of the ways that I carried myself, ensuring that my mannerisms denoted inhlonipho [respectfulness]. Motsemme (2011) explains ukuhlonipha as being expressed through bodily self-representations, which include bodily posture, manners of walking, as well as adornments and gestures etc. Shai (2020: 9) explains that portraying respectfulness had a lot to do with "how I spoke, phrased concepts, and interpreted misconceptions or ideologies that seemed off course".

Shai (2020:3) makes the point that "the researcher's self-reflection on their positionality relative to research participants is a significant first step in conducting credible qualitative research and advancing knowledge production on different phenomena". For African Feminist research the process and act of self-reflection is an important one. The kind of research we do, often emanates out of our personal contexts and experiences, and so the process of writing and

doing research is often riddled with anxieties of hoping to tell the story truthfully - even in so far as one regards themselves an 'insider'. In her article; *If I could write this in Fire/African Feminist Ethics for Research in Africa,* Mupotsa (2010) writes of an African Feminist ethic when conducting research that is premised on a thinking that feels and acts. "An ethic that is necessarily in process, partial, therefore, and contingent, but an ethic nonetheless that speaks to our palpable yearnings and that exposes our vulnerabilities and our deep desires to re-imagine and re-envision a loving freedom" (Mupotsa, 2010: 4). Therefore, while my interactions with the participants of the study were underscored by a communal effort to see umntwana wabo succeed, I also recognise the space in which this research takes place within the academy. That as the writer of the thesis, I hold interpretive power over the insights of participants. It is through making sense of our complex positionalities, where one can rely on the desire to "re-envision a loving freedom" (Mupotsa, 2010:4); to relay participants' stories as truthfully as possible. While self-reflection is important insofar as it engenders an ethic that aims to write about participants in truthful ways, it also allows one to recognise the inescapable traps within which feminist researchers are also not immune to.

As part of this ethic, I recognise that as a 23-year-old unmarried young woman in the process of completing her Masters degree from the institution known as Rhodes University, and having never experienced what it might mean to have lost one's partner; my positionality within this research was complex. Beoku-Betts (1994: 414) challenges the sameness of Black womanhood in her work, in noting the multiple identities that could complicate the research process, such as "professional/class status, gender, marital status, religious, and cultural history". Shai (2020) notes how her marital status gave her access to married women in the study, that an unmarried woman might not have received. Initially, I was anxious as to whether my participants would receive my intentions well, due to how some experiences that take place within marriage usually go unspoken or are shared with other married women alike. Furthermore, discussions of death and grief are also ones that often go unspoken. Mama (2011) explains that locally connected researchers may need to contend with working in areas where secrecy and fears of disclosure complicate methods of conducting research. However, for many of the women, the safety of anonymity created a space to speak openly. It was my responsibility as a researcher to remain respectful towards participants whose beliefs and practices included aspects that I may have felt to be oppressive towards women (Mama, 2011). As a researcher, it was important for

me to not inscribe my own judgments on the knowledge provided by the participants, but to let these views speak for themselves. This ensured that I was a listening ear, instead of a judgmental one, when views and opinions different to my own feminist politics were expressed.

3.5 Reflections and Limitations of the study

The participants interviewed in this research were women who had pre-existing relationships with my mother, and my aunt. When more participants were needed to gain greater insight into the experiences of widows, snowball sampling, which is effective in hard to reach populations groups (Mathonsi, Naidoo, and Ndlovu, 2016) was used. As a result of the sensitive nature of the study, trust was required in order to successfully conduct the interviews with participants' worries about confidentiality at bay. This meant that many of the participants knew each other or had built relationships with my mother and aunt. As such, the research sample consisted of women who had grown up in the rural or township areas of the Eastern Cape, had similar socio-economic backgrounds, and were elderly women. It may have been beneficial to interview other women who perhaps had more privileged upbringings, were currently occupying different levels of economic status, or were currently younger widows in age, as these may have brought about different experiences of widowhood. This, however, was not a significant limitation, as the data sampling worked to foster trust, as well as privileging the stories of women who are often relegated to the periphery, both literally and figuratively.

3.6 Thematic analysis

Situating this research within feminist methodology required an honest analysis of the themes within the interview process, in order to adequately report on the findings of the fieldwork process. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain thematic analysis as a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting on patterns, i.e. themes, within the data. The benefit of thematic analysis is its ability to describe the data set in rich detail. Braun and Clarke (2006) also caution against the use of passive language when accounting for themes within the data set, and to avoid accounting for themes as 'emerging' or being 'discovered', because this denies the active role of the researcher in identifying patterns and deciding which ones are of interest.

As a new researcher, I had many questions about what might constitute themes within the data set. As scholars such as Beoku-Betts (1994) have reminded us, although black women may share racialized or gendered subjectivities, experiences may differ due to cultural and religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, marital status, and other factors. Although these women were mainly elderly women, IsiXhosa speaking, who resided in the rural and township areas of the research sites, and many of them had worked in the informal labour market, and had been self-employed, or unemployed, there were still differences in some of their experiences. In some cases, these differences were due to familial and religious beliefs.

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that although there will ideally be several instances wherein the theme is present across the data set, an abundance of occurrences does not necessarily mean that the theme itself is more crucial. The identification of themes is something that researchers have debated with, in terms of how we determine prevalence and why we do so in the ways that we do (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Understanding that data coding does not take place in an epistemological vacuum (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was necessary for this research in order to be self-reflexive and honest about the analysis process.

In the case of Xhosa widows, little has been written about the everyday navigations of citizenship once one has been released from the traditional period of mourning. The main aim of this project, therefore, is to explore the participants' own interpretations of their widowhood. This necessitates that the data set be described as richly as possible, in order to avoid deductive analysis that would be driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the research area (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The purpose of Chapter Four of the study, will therefore be to privilege the views of the participants that are not usually voiced in the literature and, ultimately, letting the data speak for itself.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research participants, the research sites, and outlined some of the practical challenges that were present in conducting this research in the context of ongoing death and grief in the time of COVID-19. This chapter sought to highlight the idea that feminist methodology needs to be modulated by the material under study. The methodological intervention, therefore, was to centre the participants of the study as the sites of knowledge

through the notions of iziduko and returning home, while also recognising the researcher's interpretative power, and approaching these complexities with honesty. The goal of this chapter was to highlight the importance of feminist methodologies, and the complex positions that feminist researchers find themselves in, particularly when researching contexts of 'home'.

Chapter Four

Ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwana: Paths to widowhood, building and protecting woman-centred livelihoods

4.1 Introduction

Widowhood may be understood as contested and contestable, for social, legal, and economic reasons (Bennett and Pereira, 2013). This study aims to understand where the ruptures and continuities lie in the negotiation of one's identity as a widow once the traditional mourning period of ukuzila has ended. What emerged in Chapter Two of this study is the need to trace the life of the widow, from conceptions of marriage, ukuzila, as well as the period that follows by the release of the widow from mourning. This study aims to focus on widows' own conceptions of widowhood, and their own experiences of navigating post-mourning life. The findings demonstrate that these life experiences (i.e. ubufazi (womanhood or wifehood), ubumama (motherhood), ubuhlolokazi (widowhood)) do not happen in isolation, and that the everyday navigations of women's citizenship lie in utilising conceptions of womanhood/wifehood, motherhood, and the access or lack thereof that these ties provide.

The previous chapter outlined some of the methodological decisions and concerns emanating from the idea of returning home, and interrogated the notion of how we come to know what we know. As was stated in the previous chapter, all the participants of the study, except for Dr Nomfundo Mali, were issued pseudonyms in the form of iziduko (clan names).

Much of this chapter is the presentation of portions of the interviews held with the research participants, as centring their voices was a significant motivation behind the study itself. The purpose of this chapter is to report on the findings of the study, and identify the significant themes presented in the data. As suggested in the previous chapter by Braun and Clarke (2006), the process of identifying themes led me to select themes that were present across the data set in multiple instances. In some cases, the themes selected were relevant and significant to the research objectives of the project at large. Part of the data collection was an interview conducted with Dr Nomfundo Mali of the Widows Empowerment Programme (WEP) based in Cape Town. She provided insights on the role that is/may be played by communal programmes, NGOs, religious entities, and state entities amongst others, in contributing to how widows come to

experience their widowhood in democratic South Africa. Dr Mali had a different set of questions relating to the organisational objectives and aims of the WEP, and her responses added another dimension of meaning to the interviews with the widows. Ultimately, the themes present in this interview spoke to many of the concerns, insights, and experiences of the 14 widows interviewed. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews, the participants shared their stories of how they have come to negotiate and construct livelihoods for themselves and their families once the mourning period of ukuzila has ended.

The themes discussed in this chapter include: the contestations with the widow identity/label; ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwana bakho (remaining rooted at the homestead to secure and protect the livelihoods, inheritance, and dignity of your children); the role of spirituality and the church in navigating widowhood; classed experiences of inheritances and wills; and the use of communal efforts and ties to forge sustainable livelihoods.

The theme of contestations with the widow identity/label is one that provided a rupture in understandings and conceptions of marriage and what kinds of marriages would give one access to widowhood rites. During the interview process, it was found that some of the women had been married customarily as per Xhosa culture of ukunxityiswa, which is a ceremony of welcoming and providing elderly counsel to the new bride. Other women had been married under civil law, or both civil and customary law, while others had never been married to their partners, but had had children with them, and had cohabited for many years prior to their death. One participant had been divorced prior to the passing of her ex-husband, but still observed mourning rites and practices. All these women were known to themselves, their families, and those in their communities, as widows. This theme demonstrates the heterogeneous and complex nature of partnerships, and the claims (or lack thereof), that women can have within these complexities once they become widowed. These findings also rupture our understanding of who the widow is in society, and how this identity emerges in democratic South Africa.

The theme of ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwana bakho, was significant for many of the women, and was spoken about in two ways, particularly when asked about whether they had thought about or had taken the decision to remarry. Firstly, foundational to being a (good) widow was being a woman who respected herself as umfazi [a wife], as someone ongaphitizeliyo. This term carries with it a negative connotation which implies a lack of rootedness, or a widow who

diminishes the respect of herself and her home by being someone who is always out and about in public. Secondly, being a (good) widow entailed protecting the livelihoods and dignity of their children. For most of the women, central to their modes of being, was the protection of their children. The main idea carried through in this theme was that one's priority as a widow, and the way one would advise young newly widowed women to conduct themselves, would be to remain rooted in their homestead, so as to honour themselves and their children.

The role of spirituality and the church in navigating widowhood was a theme that was consistent and significant throughout. For these women, the church's support was a significant factor in how they had been able to get through the period of mourning, as well as their faith in God. All the women, although not necessarily regular church goers or members of the church, demonstrated firm beliefs in God and the dependence on a higher power for strength to endure trials and tribulations. Many of the women indicated that, although they were not allowed to attend communal gatherings as a way of showing respect by avoidance in the process of ukuzila, they did continue to attend church services. The difference during this period was that they would not participate in any post-church service gatherings or activities.

The classed implications on experiences of widowhood revealed that much of one's ability to gain access to wills and inheritances lay in one's access to legal resources and their knowledge of the processes in this regard. Where there was a presence of assets and a will to account for these, the women were often met with ill-treatment from their in-laws. However, in instances where the partner had died intestate (not having made a will before their death), negative experiences with in-laws were hardly reported. This was largely linked to the lack of a sizeable estate. The classed implications of widowhood were further demonstrated in ways beyond legal recourse, as many widows gain access to ways of survival and securing their livelihoods in the post-mourning period through communal efforts among women, such as: stokvels, burial societies, church prayer groups, farming, and livestock rearing amongst others.

The themes expressed below account for the personal experiences of the women interviewed. They show the ways in which their experiences overlapped and varied. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants mainly in IsiXhosa. The responses have been translated into English. However, in some moments, where the

IsiXhosa term signals more emotive and cultural significance, I have attempted to provide explanations that convey the meaning of the term as closely as possible in English.

4.2. Contestations and conceptions of the widow identity/label

When embarking on this research, it was easy to assume that the widow was a woman who possessed certain attributes. This was a woman who had been legally married to their deceased husband. However, the interview process led to me encountering women who had either never been married to their partners, had only been married customarily, or had been legally divorced to their partners prior to their deaths. Meeting these women allowed for an expanded definition of what is implied or presupposed when one refers to a woman as a 'widow'. Additionally, experiences during the fieldwork alerted me to the contestations with the IsiXhosa term 'umhlolokazi' (widow), that some of the women had, due to the stigmatization that often occurs to those that are known as widows in their communities. This section will detail these narratives.

Below is a table indicating the nature of the partnerships experienced by the women interviewed. Additionally, the table indicates the mode of mourning undertaken by the women, which will become relevant in the next section.

Participant	**Nature of partnership**	**Mode of mourning**
1. MamBhele	Civil and customary marriage	Did not mourn through dress (Religious reasons)
2. MaNcobeni	Civil and customary marriage	Black mourning dress
3. MaBhayi	Civil and customary marriage	Black mourning dress
4. MaNdala	Civil and customary marriage	Black mourning dress
5. MamJwarha	Civil and customary marriage	Black mourning dress
6. MamNgwevu	Civil and customary marriage	Black mourning dress

7. MaSukude	Divorced	Did not mourn by dress
8. MamCirha	Customary marriage, separated	Did not mourn by dress
9. MaSkhosana	Civil marriage	Black mourning dress
10. MamDlangathi	Customary marriage	Black mourning dress
11. MamGqwashu	Civil and customary marriage	Black mourning dress
12. MaRadebe	Cohabited	Did not mourn by dress
13. MaJola	Civil and customary marriage	Navy amadakhi
14. MaZikhali	Civil and customary marriage	Navy amadakhi

Figure 4.1: Nature of partnerships and modes of mourning

4.2.1 Paths to widowhood

As previously noted, the women experienced their marriages and partnerships differently, but were known as widows by their communities, those around them, and self-identified as widows. This was an interesting discovery because it opened up a conversation about the contested and contestable claims to widowhood. All women mourned the deaths of their partners, in some or other way. As pointed out above, some mourned wearing the black mourning dress, while others mourned wearing amadhaki - the navy German print dress. Others observed some of the key tenets of ukuzila as outlined in Chapter Two, which include showing respect by avoidance for an allocated time, without wearing mourning dress. Some of these modes of mourning were dependent on the nature of partnership. MamCirha for example, had been married customarily, but had been separated from her husband for years at the time of his death, and so she was not expected to wear mourning dress. She explained that:

> We hadn't gotten married. For us, it was that thing of them undertaking the process of paying lobola. To the extent that it happened one time when he came back to visit me, bearing a ring, and I said "No, I can't start by marrying you, when you have not paid lobola at my home." Kaloku thina singaabaya abantu, uyayiqonda? [We are the people of the olden days, you see?]...Next thing you

know, you are being seen at your home suddenly wearing a ring. Xa bekutheni? [How did we get there?] Things like that. We were not married, you see. But I was umfazi [a wife] because I wore the traditional attire zobufazi.

MamDlangathi:

Mmh, our marriage was a customary one. It's that thing of thinking that firstly, I have a solid understanding with my husband so there is nothing… there is nothing that could bring about problems for me in the end. He's not the only one I have a good relationship with in this household, but I have good relations with everyone. You see. And then you keep saying I will, I will, and then you never do. We used to always say that we will go and get married, we will go and get married, we will… but then life had other plans…. You can never know what the future holds, because time is not ours. You see now?

MaRadebe:

I thought that umntu ongumama [a person who is a mother] in her household, is someone that is married. Umntu ongumama are essentially two people, you see? That is how I understood it. That in order for you to be umama oqinileyo omele indlu yakho, [umama that is strong and firm in her position at her household], there needed to be someone beside you who supports you so that you can be able to ukumela indlu yakho [to stand firm for the things of your household]. But as time went by, I saw that no, it is possible for a person to do things for themselves. Azimele [To be independent]. Indeed, in the end, I stood firmly for myself, I stood. [Name removed] and I never married, but we lived together. We stayed together in the same household for many years. Because it was '94 when we first met, until death separated us in 2011. We were unmarried, just living together that's all.

For MaRadebe, the initial belief was that, in order for one to truly be umntu ongumama in her household, she needed to be married, and have someone beside her. However, through her own experience and identifying herself as umntu ongumama even as an unmarried woman, she allows us to understand that the categories of ubufazi [being a wife] and being umntu ongumama are not necessarily automatically linked to the presence of a man in the household, as husband and wife. When MaNdala noted that umhlolokazi "ungumfazi kaloku naye" – a widow is also a woman – this opened up a site to understand how it is that women are still able to utilise the links, benefits, and ties earned from being umntu ongumama and umfazi in the homestead, in their subsequent time of widowhood. The term umfazi, as used by MaNdala and MamCirha, demonstrates the

fluidity of the term in the linguistic sense to either connote being a wife or a woman, and is dependent on the context in which it is used.

MaSukude had already been through a finalized divorce from her husband, years prior to his passing, but she still chose to observe ukuzila. When asked about her observance of ukuzila, although she was no longer legally married to the deceased, MaSukude said:

> You do it for your children, so that they do not have questions that you will not be able to answer to in future. Give him the respect due to him, even when he is no longer here, for the sake of your children and for yourself. Wawutshilo mos, wathi nawuko hlulwa kukufa. [You declared that you would be separated by death]. Certain things may have happened in the past, but as a person who believes in prayer, you need to accept and say "Kulungile, kuthande uThixo." ["It is well, because this was the will of God". Give him the respect due to him as well.

MamGqwashu shared similar sentiments and said:

> Oh, ukuzila my child, depends on your heart, and how much you loved him. You are showing him love, because it will never be said that you are in mourning again.

For MamCirha, mourning also did not take place in the traditional sense, but she expressed that she wished to respect her husband by behaving in certain ways, even though they were no longer together prior to his death:

> I never mourned because we had been separated for many years. I attended the funeral just like everyone else. I never mourned. I never did anything. I was never given any elderly counsel. We just went to the funeral, and I was the one who saw that I now needed to behave in certain ways. I saw that I needed to remain just like this… if I choose to have romantic relationships, then they must be a private matter for example, you see? It mustn't be public now that my husband is no longer with us, you see.

MamCirha had been umfazi customarily, and had had children with her husband, but had separated from him many years prior to his death. The family did not require her to mourn explaining that:

> No, they never said anything because even my Mother-in-law stayed with them, when there was no father figure. She stayed with them. Mmh, there was no father figure. They didn't say anything. I think they also understood that we spent many years apart from each other, not staying in the same household.

MamCirha's mother-in-law was also widowed. Her husband had left their family decades earlier to go seek employment in Johannesburg, never to be seen again. To this day, the family does not know what happened to him. MamCirha's mother-in-law lived her life known to herself, and by those around her, as a widow and continued to stay in her marital homestead with her children.

Although these women had varying paths to widowhood, they self-identified as widows, and shared similar ideals on how one was expected to conduct themselves upon the passing of their partners. Although some were not given elderly counsel in terms of how to go about conducting themselves, ways of conduct were seemingly embedded in them already. MaSukude spoke of mourning in her heart and not through clothes, and ukuzigcina: preserving oneself. For many of the women, mourning was a way of demonstrating respect, and a final act of love to their husbands. This was spoken of particularly in relation to being able to secure the dignity of their households and their children.

4.2.2 "Mhlolokazi ndini!": labels and stigmas

When asked about what being uMhlolokazi (a widow) meant, many of the women brought similar understandings of this term. For many of the women, this term was used to refer to a woman who had lost indoda (a man) or umyeni (a husband). This was interesting because these terms were often used interchangeably, indicating no specification as to whether a marriage needed to have been the defining factor of the partnership or not. One participant, MaNdala, however, was more vocal about her disdain for this term, while others alluded to the ways in which the meanings attached to the term are loaded with negative implications and stigma. MaNdala had this to say:

> When you don't have a man, you are "umhlolokazi." Mmh, what comes to my mind is that you don't have a man. We don't use that [term]. Because when people say "ungu mhlolokazi," you are going to struggle in the future. Mmh, that thing is very bothersome. When people now say "Mhlolokazi ndini!"

This sparked an interest in me, because if one is going to undertake a study on Xhosa widows, then understanding the meanings attached to the terms used in the study is important. I then asked MaNdala what she thought was the most fitting or most appropriate term for women who had lost their partners, and she passionately said:

> Ungumfazi kaloku naye [she is also a woman]. She is also umfazi [a woman], she is just a person without a husband. We're just living in that way because we do not have husbands. Mmh we are just living nje just like that, there is no other thing.

MaNdala speaks to the idea that umhlolokazi is also a woman or umfazi. The only difference now is that their partners have passed on. MaNdala recognised the stigmas that are often attached to women who are known as abahlolokazi [widows]. For her, the fact that her husband had passed on was not a reasonable justification for the stigma attached to this term, when after all, they were all women. Many participants lamented on the ways in which the term 'umhlolokazi' carries with it a stigma that follows one in their daily lives. Much of this stigma was due to the visibility in their mourning, through mourning dress.

As shown in Figure 4.1, out of the 14 widows interviewed, ten wore a mourning dress during ukuzila. Eight wore black mourning dress, while two wore the navy amadhaki German print dress. The remaining four widows did not mourn through dress either due to religious reasons, or their nature of partnership. A correlation may be found between the wearing of any kind of mourning dress (be it black attire or amadakhi), and having undertaken a civil and/or customary marriage. Apart from MamBhele, who did not mourn through mourning dress due to religious reasons, a correlation may also be found between the publicness of mourning through dress, and having been recognised by the family as a civil and/or customary wife.

The periods of wearing mourning dress seemed to vary between three, six and nine months. The time periods varied due to factors such as needing to remove the mourning dress in order to return to work, or having young children. When lamenting on her mourning experience, MaSkhosana cited her reasons for mourning for three months:

> I eventually completed that process of three months. The reason my in-laws made me mourn in mourning dress for three months, was because I basically live alone. I live with my young grandchild, so there is no one to run errands for me, you see? So I always need to go myself, and now I won't be able to run errands with that attire, so they said I will wear the black mourning dress for three months for uba unike isidima ebantwaneni bakho [for you to bestow dignity on your children]. Yes, and for my dignity, as well as that of my home. And forget about the naysayers.

The period for wearing mourning dress was seemingly flexible, with many of the women choosing longer periods due to strict familial beliefs regarding mourning, or because of their own personal convictions and determinations. MamGqwashu for example had wanted to mourn for a full year, but this time was cut short due to her grand-children needing to undergo the Xhosa coming of age practice, of ulwaluko, for young boys. For her to be able to attend the event, she needed to first be released from mourning, and the associated stigmas surrounding it.

> MaSkhosana: Being umhlolokazi is another thing that I never… I was just used to seeing it… I used to just see uMama wearing the mourning dress and think that it was easy. That life is not easy. As a result, now even if you are at the mall, and you bump into someone you know you cannot stop to greet them. You can't. You mustn't speak loudly, you must speak quietly and in hushed tones, people cannot stop you when you're walking, you must just continue walking on your path. You can't just stand around; you must remain inside your house. So, it's just another experience that feels abnormal – I can't explain it. Because now, your entire life changes. As a result, I think in that three months mourning period I only went to the mall twice, because the annoying thing is having everyone looking at you. The moment someone sees you, they are seeing the fact that you don't have a husband, your man has passed away. So being umhlolokazi is something that is terribly frustrating.

MaSkhosana went onto explain the ways that, although there was nothing she wished to change about the process of ukuzila, she felt that the negative attitudes regarding widows were also perpetuated by other women:

> No, there is nothing that I would wish to change in the way that I was in that period, and the way that things were done, because they were doing it the way that things used to be done a long time ago. You understand? And now what I realised, I don't know if it's maybe because us as women also have abusive tendencies towards each other in some ways, during that period yobu hlolokazi [of mourning]? But there is definitely something that I feel is very abusive about

> how we treat each other as women when we are abahlolokazi. That thing of what I was telling you about when I would go to the mall.

MaSkhosana went on to recount one of her encounters at the mall with a woman who reprimanded her for stopping to stand and speak to a woman who had been a friend of her late husband. The friend had stopped MaSkhosana in shock at the mourning attire she was wearing, as she had not known about the passing of her husband. The woman passer-by had reprimanded her, not knowing the reason for her stopping to briefly speak to her late husband's friend. MamDlangathi also shared some of the negative attitudes that others would project onto her:

> Life changes – you enter another life, and this life you are entering is not easy. And in its difficulty, things are different from before. Firstly, when you are umhlolokazi you are wearing this black clothing that seems scary to others, you know? No one speaks to you, and everyone finds you unapproachable. Others are empathetic towards you, others abhor you. Umhlolokazi is met with abhorrence, she is unwanted, and is disliked to the extent where one won't even want you to come close to them. Because of this outfit [they think that] uzomosulela ngalento unayo [you will transmit what you have to them]. You are going to bring death upon them too, you see? But actually, it is not contagious. It is the path of every human being.

Both MaSkhosana and MamDlangathi explained the deeply embedded notion of umhlolokazi carrying with her bad luck and darkness (i.e. isimnyama) that has been brought about by the death of her partner. As such, one is usually restricted in their interactions with others, for fear of bringing death upon others. This explains the key tenets of ukuzila, which are marked by silence and showing respect by avoidance. However, the way that MamDlangathi phrased this in saying, "uzomosulela ngalento unayo" [you will transmit what you have to them], alerts us to where the custom of cleansing widows comes from during the process of releasing the widow from mourning.

MaSukude had already been divorced from her husband prior to his death, but she also underwent widowhood rites, although she did not wear mourning dress. Part of these rites were for her to also undergo a cleansing, for ukususa isimnyama [ridding her of the bad luck and darkness]. MaSukude explained:

> So ukuzila was not an easy thing to do, but we did everything that was meant to be done. But in my heart, bendizilile ndizigcinile [I was in mourning, and continued to abstain from social life], doing everything. But what I did not do was undergo ukuzila through the wearing of mourning dress. I was cleansed, and they said that that was for ukususa isimnyama [ridding me of the bad luck and darkness]. Elazila [That presence of grief and mourning]. I washed, and then I came back [to the house] and started using the things that they advised me to use. After that I then did everything that I was instructed to do.

MaSukude said that, although she wore neither black, nor navy amadhaki German print mourning dress, in her heart, she was in mourning. Mourning, therefore, is more than a matter of public perception in mourning dress and public behaviour. It is also a process that many women undergo as a way to demonstrate their respect to their positions as wives, as mothers, and also to the fathers of their children. This will be explained in greater detail in the next theme.

The findings shown in this section therefore demonstrate that for the majority of the widows interviewed, whether for personal reasons or family beliefs and tradition, women who lose their partners mourn them through following the rituals underscored in the practice of ukuzila. These include mourning attire and showing respect by avoidance.

4.3 "Ndaphakama ndavuma uSiyakudumisa": Spirituality during and after ukuzila

For many of the women, church proved to be the only space they could go to freely during their respective periods of mourning. While the women were members of various denominations, they each emphasised the importance of spirituality in their widowhood. Some chose to stay away from church of their own free will. Whether or not the women attended church during ukuzila, the idea of holding onto faith and prayer as a mode of coping and finding joy, long after the mourning period, was a significant finding in the study.

One participant, MamGqwashu, recounted the funeral of her late husband, explaining that her brother-in-law gave her permission to stand up, and sing *Umbhedesho wemini yecawa*, the Methodist Church hymn that is commonly referred to as uSiyakudumisa.

MamGqwashu:

> What I loved during the time when hymns were being sung… when my church was leading the singing of the hymns, err…my brother-in-law, the younger one, that is my age-mate said to me "phakama [MamGqwashu] uvume". Stand up, MamGqwashu and sing. Yho it was as if he had ironed my tattered heart. I stood up and sang praises. This Siyakudumisa… the hymn was rising and reaching its peak, and I was also moving with it, singing praises in my own right. It felt so good. He said to the congregation, may you never say so and so said… it is me, it is me who told MamGqwashu to stand up. Yho! He really eased my heart, you know. Wandingcwalisa. [He sanctified me]. Yes, because I longed to sing, but as a widow you are not permitted to do so. But he said, it's me who is giving you permission, and so I stood up and sang the praise because at my maternal home singabantu bengoma [We are people who believe in the power of song and praise].

Umbhedesho wemini yecawa is a hymn that is sung at the beginning of the church service, with all members of the church standing up. It is a hymn that many know off by heart, a spirited prayer of both surrender and praise. MamGqwashu, is a member of the Women's Manyano. Upon arrival at her house, she had her Manyano uniform on display, neatly ironed and ready for the day COVID-19 protocols would eventually allow her to return to her most beloved place – the church. MamGqwashu specifically noted that her brother-in-law "wandingcwalisa." This is a term specifically used in the religious sense, to refer to how one can be purified or made to be morally acceptable. Being given the platform to stand up and sing along with the other attendants in the funeral was taboo for a widow, who is usually expected to observe silence and stillness. In this moment however, MamGqwashu's brother-in-law utilised his position within the family to momentarily release her from the darkness that is associated with a grieving widow, into a moment of sanctification – where she felt as though she could freely cast her cares and burdens unto the Lord.

> MamGqwashu: I was going to church. Bendinga hlelanga phantsi. [I did not take leave or excuse myself from church]. No, the devil will end up coming into your life, whilst you are still staying away from church with your black mourning dress, and he will play with you. Even when my church would come, during that period immediately after my husband's passing, the preaching by the lead pastor was that I should never abandon God. The moment I abandon Him, He will desert me. You see? So yho I *lived* the Church [emphasis added]. What I wouldn't do though, is to attend the meetings of amaRhamente [the congregation]. No, but I

> would be here in my house, and leave and go to church services and come back to stay at home, and so on.

When explaining how ukuzila impacted her ability to attend communal gatherings and the like, MaBhayi explained that:

> I wouldn't go. I didn't attend such things. I would however attend church services, but I wouldn't really be involved in anything, I would just be attending. Once the service ended, I would leave and leave the rest of the congregation to do their post-service obligations and activities.

Many of the women would attend church services but knew not to attend post-church service gatherings and activities. MaZikhali, on the other hand, was not a staunch church goer prior to her husband's death. However, the prayer meetings that were held leading up to the funeral gave her a significant sense of strength and impacted her faith immensely.

MaZikhali:

> When they were speaking, they said; God had a plan. "Mama, God had a plan with this". God would never give you a burden that is too heavy for you to carry, everything is light with God. Give all of this over to Him, and he will carry it Himself. Do not carry it on your own. Even with these children being so young, God was still present when it was decided that your husband may leave us. He knew. So, don't cry now, hush, give everything over to God. Once all of this is over, you should find yourself a church that you will attend – a church that speaks about Jesus. Because when you have Jesus inside of you, you have joy, peace, and a comforter.

The Church also played an important role in MamBhele's release from mourning because she chose not to mourn, for religious reasons. She observed ukuzila in her behaviour and conduct around others for a period of six months, but did not wear any kind of mourning dress. When it came time to end her period of mourning, MamBhele explained that:

> I didn't mourn. Our church does not mourn. But for six months, one must know that someone close to them has passed on. You can't just gallivant around in public as if you are not grieving. You can't be gallivanting, because even if I had worn the black mourning dress, umhlolokazi that galivants around elalini [in the village], is not a good image.

When asked whether she had received any elder counsel, even in her own way of mourning, MamBhele explained that “ndiyaliwe ngokwase nkonzweni”: she had been given elderly counsel in the way that the church does things. For MamBhele, because she did not mourn in the traditional sense, her process of being released from mourning was different. She elaborated and said:

> No, there was no ceremony to release me from mourning. But the thing is, when those six months came to an end, that is when I went to the church to officially report that the six months was now over. Now that it was over, nothing much was really done. They just prayed over me. There was nothing much. I just went to report and that was that. We prayed, and I also realised and felt that I was now free. Although I didn’t find myself to be that free, but, I knew that at least now I had the opportunity to be able to go to the shops. I could be able to go to my neighbours and ask for salt and the like, and I could do things that I needed to do for myself.

The findings in this section are twofold. For many of the women, the church was an important site of presence during the period of ukuzila. In a period that is usually marked by a time of seclusion and avoidance of the public, the church was seemingly the most accessible public gathering for them. Secondly, the stories told by the women indicate that the church was a key site to regain voice, well after their period of mourning, and it continues to be a way to find joy and comfort, as MaZikhali noted.

4.4 Ukuchithwa kwezila (The release of the widow from mourning)

As demonstrated in the previous section, many of the participants marked the end of their official mourning periods of ukuzila by removing the mourning dress and undertaking cultural rituals for their cleansing. Although she did not mourn through dress, MaSukude, for example, previously indicated that she had also undergone a cleansing ceremony to cleanse her of her time of mourning. MamBhele, who also did not wear mourning dress for religious reasons, marked the end of her mourning period by going to church and announcing to her church elders that she had concluded her six-month mourning period. MaRadebe, who also did not wear mourning dress, did not mark the end of her mourning in any particular way.

For those who wore mourning dress however, the ritualized process of being released from mourning was a noteworthy moment. The majority of the participants undertook a ceremony to release them from mourning, which usually included a trip to a nearby river before sunrise in order to wash the mourning period off; the issuing of new clothes (different to those worn during the mourning period from head to toe); as well as being given elderly counsel on how to conduct oneself as a widow. Participants who underwent this process all explained that it was the in-laws who were responsible for ensuring a smooth transition.

Those who wore black mourning dress removed this attire and were given amadakhi to wear once they were released from mourning. Those who wore amadakhi as mourning dress, were given new clothes that could be considered as 'everyday' wear (i.e. skirts, blouses, and a headwrap etc, with new pairs of shoes).

MamDlangathi, who had worn black mourning dress during her period of mourning explained that she went to a nearby river to remove her mourning dress:

> Yes, you remove your mourning dress once you get there, and you wash yourself in the river. Once you have finished washing, the mourning attire is burnt there. You then return from the river, having changed out of the mourning dress and into new clothing. Amadakhi kengoku, ingathi ungu mtshakazi [The German print dress this time around, as though you are a new bride].

For women like MamDlangathi, who experienced significant abuse from her in-laws upon the passing of her husband, the process of releasing her from mourning was a difficult one to negotiate. Her in-laws did not come to release her from mourning. She was released from mourning with the help of a woman who had been her neighbour and shared clan affiliations with her husband's family.

When speaking about what took place when it was her time to be released from mourning, MamNgwevu explained:

> It had to be like that when you are in mourning for your husband. You stay in mourning for five months, and then on the sixth month, you are released. Yes, one gets given elderly counsel. They say from today, kufuneka ugcine elikhaya [you must protect and keep this home], you must not go anywhere. You must protect and keep the children, and open up this home. Yes, it mustn't be as though now

> that you have been released from mourning, you are being released into yoba mawubhabhe esithubeni [to be gallivanting around in public].

Many of the women made sense of their positions within their homes, and how they were meant to remain rooted in the homestead, through the advice and counsel of elders when they were newly married, and newly widowed. The role of indodakazi was mentioned much more frequently than uMazala (mother-in-law), which was different to what is usually present in the literature on the relationship between uMakoti and her in-laws. Indodakazi may be loosely translated to mean the sister-in-law. However, this identity in the Xhosa cultural sense carries larger weight than biology, but also denotes seniority, whereby this woman is also one's 'husband' in the cultural sense. Indodakazi is therefore a key part both in the welcoming of a new bride, and also in the releasing of the widow from mourning. Women play a significant role in ensuring that the widow transitions from mourning successfully.

Some women explained that where there was an absence of indodakazi or elderly women within the family, elderly women in the community who shared clan affiliations with them could also help in the process of releasing the widow from mourning. This was especially helpful for those who experienced tense relations with their in-laws upon their husband's passing. The elderly counsel that was provided to many of the participants upon their release from mourning, had a significant influence on some of the decisions that the women made, such as remaining at the homestead, and the ways in which they choose to conduct their post-mourning lives. This will be explored further in the next sections.

4.5 Classed navigations of widowhood

The responses from ooMama indicated that many of them did not have many issues with the law and gaining access to inheritances, because their husbands either died intestate or did not have significant financial assets or resources that they had left behind. For those whose partners had left behind sizeable financial assets, they were often rendered powerless by the law and were taken advantage of due to their perceived lack of knowledge or formal education. These women are the ones who found themselves negotiating significant conflict, particularly with their in-laws. In all of these situations, the women consistently mentioned a reliance on their

communal ties with other women in their cohort who had also gotten married around the same time as them. This reliance took the form of imigalelo (stokvels), oMasingcwabane (burial societies), oMasiphekisane (grocery stokvels), and so on. These networks were fostered both communally, and at church. Many of the women, however, indicated that they had little to no knowledge of programmes, NGOs and other resources designed to support widows. The findings from the interview with the Widows Empowerment Programme will be shared in this section, to indicate the communal efforts that could continue to take place in support of widows, in lieu of inadequate state support.

4.5.1 (In)access to wills and inheritances

MamDlangathi relayed to me the painful story of dispossession that she encountered with her husband's family. MamDlangathi, now a domestic worker, had previously been the owner of a tavern, and had numerous taxis that were thriving in the transportation business. She ran these businesses for years, together with her husband. At the time of interviewing her, she told the harrowing story of how she left her marital home with the clothes on her back, as if she was a wife that had come out of nowhere - a wife that had not been known by the family.

> It was not pleasant at all when he passed away. Ucinge ke umntu onezintu neh? [Bear in mind that this person had sizeable assets]. So now they were slaughtering that cow in the morning that is customarily for ukumkhapha [sending him off into the ancestral realm]. One of my husband's half-brothers said that he knows that my husband had left me an inheritance, so I must take my inheritance, go on and use it, and never return.

MamDlangathi went on to say:

> They took everything from me. I continued going to court, never tiring. The first thing that happened at court, which is why I say that abahlolokazi no longer have value once their men pass away, I would find that my docket was no longer there. It had gone missing, and no one knew about it. We needed to then photocopy the documents that I had on me, once again. This happened on 4 occasions.

MaZikhali detailed a similar experience:

> It was very difficult indeed. Zacotha kuba andazinto. [Things were delayed because I was not knowledgeable]. Things were so delayed. I even ended up seeking legal assistance so that they can investigate things on my behalf; what's going on, why there hasn't been any communication to resolve the matter.

Both women encountered difficulties with legal assistance, and felt that because they were now widowed, they were undermined by the powers that be. These were family patriarchs and legal practitioners. For MaZikhali, she felt that resolving her husband's estate and affairs was delayed because those that were in charge thought her unknowledgeable.

Dr Nomfundo Mali of the WEP noted this problem as one of the aims of their programme:

> We have a strong working relationship with the Masters Court because we always invite them for sessions, especially with new widows so that they can tell them what is it exactly that is expected of them. So in that way, they don't have to move up and down without knowing what is it that I need to do, whilst someone is still emotionally vulnerable.

Dr Mali also explained the aims of their programme and the network it creates:

> And for us then, is to see widows championing their own network. If a widow is poor, she cannot afford legal assistance, one of the widows who is a lawyer must stand up for the sister to assist. So that is the kind of network that we envision. To see widows standing up for each other, and also societal norms and values sometimes they tend not to put the person in a space where she is free to express what she feels. So, for us the aim is that the society can turn the page and provide a space where widows can just be widows, or can be people who have lost husbands but they are still people who can still live openly.

Dr Mali alerts us to the ways in which those in positions of power (both within family structures and the public arena of the legal fraternity), are often less sympathetic to the plight of widows, and will often take advantage of a widow not being in an emotional and cultural position to speak up for themselves because they are in mourning. Additionally, Dr Mali also emphasises the importance of the creation of networks amongst people with similar experiences in order to construct safer spaces for themselves. Ultimately, this explains much of what the widows

interviewed in this study have done, in less conventional or formalised ways, to show up for their created communities. This will be expanded on in greater detail in Chapter Five.

4.5.2 "Ndangena ebafazini": Working with other women to secure livelihoods

Many of the women detailed their experiences of finding economic assistance from other women that were in their cohort. Many of these women were reliant on social welfare, which was often insufficient to deal with their realities. Stokvels, burial societies, grocery stokvels, farming, and co-ops were some of the modes of fashioning sustainable livelihoods.

MaZikhali:

> Indeed, I feel as though I play a dual-role in the house. Ndingu tata-mama [I am both father, and mother] because it happened that even with my younger child, woluswe ndim [I was the one who made the preparations for him to go to initiation school as a young Xhosa boy]. His father was no longer with us at that point. He is the one whose father passed away when he was 2 years… no 3 years old. Yes, so I did everything for him. I saved up for him, and when he turned 18 and said "Mama, andishiyeki" ["Mama, I cannot be left behind"]. I also knew that it just goes with the process, and he must go. I said "go". I knew that I had saved up over the years. Yes, I did imigalelo. I did imigalelo whenever they said they are doing imigalelo yonyaka [yearly stokvels] I would also take part. I started these yearly stokvels when he was 16 years old. I even did the grocery ones, where we would pay R100 for groceries – I did it. What was I doing it for? So that when that year comes [when he turns 18], there is food to cook for him. Even the yearly monetary stokvel, when he was 16 years that money matured and came out. I told him to go and lay-by clothes. Go and lay-by clothes. He was accompanied by his sister. I told them to go and lay-by clothes at these shops. They went to go lay-by from these shops, those clothes that he would need when he returns from initiation school. I then continued with the stokvels, and I'd put R100, R100, in different ones, and I would go and lay-bye again. I would take from his SASSA grant when he used to grant and go and lay-by, I would also partake in stokvels from the same money. Ndisebenzisa inhloko [I was very strategic]. I would take R200 for another one, the yearly one was R100, and the grocery one was also R100. Ndenza oko kuhlakanipha [I was strategic and calculative in that way]. I thought to myself that I couldn't go and ask from the brother or uTata omncinci wabo [the children's uncles] and say "please support me umntana uyoluka", the child is going to initiation school. That is when I will be ridiculed, and my child made the laughing-stock. Makhe ndizame udibana nabanye abafazi. [Let me get together with other women]. When my son was still making it known at 16 that he needs to go to initiation at 18 years, I was collecting resources. Nyani ndangena ebafazini [Indeed I aligned myself with other women] until now.

MamBhele:

> There is nothing much to worry about or that gives me problems, because even when I am facing difficulties and troubles, ndithi ndocinga othile, ndibaleke ndiyotshona kuye. Uba "Hewethu, khandincede ntombi, khandophule ndise ngxakini apha." [when I think of one of the women here, I run and seek assistance from them. To say "Please help me out ntombi, please meet me halfway. I am in trouble here"].

MamBhele details how the communal ties with other women that she has nurtured become her first point of call when problems arise in her household, and she requires assistance – financial or otherwise. MaBhayi also relied significantly on imigalelo once she had reached the end of her mourning period. Similar to how some women needed to go and report at the church that their mourning periods had ended, MaBhayi explained that she needed to go and announce with her stokvel/society members that she had now returned to work together with them again.

MaBhayi:

> It really does help a lot because whenever you have something going on, ubhekisa embuthweni wakho[you take it up with your society], and they will then work together with you on that thing. Mmh, you go back to them. Because in these things zemigalelo, you need to go back to them and report that you have now been released from mourning, you have now returned to come and work together with them again.

MaSkhosana had a similar experience when she was encouraged by other women to re-integrate herself back into the community after mourning. She had remained in a period of avoidance well after her six months of mourning had ended. When asked about her role in the community, MaSkhosana had the following to say.

> There's really nothing much that has changed, because even when there is something happening, for example if someone in the community has passed on, I avail myself. I go, ndiyovela [and be in attendance]. In everything that is done by community members, I am always present. When I was still in mourning though, I was not attending all of these things, but once I was released from mourning, I think I only started attending events after six months, because I continued to remain at home. I remember when these other elderly women came to take me out of the house, and they said "soze kaloku! Sikukhulule?! Ngoku awubonakali? Ha.a ayenziwa lonto." ["No ways! Even now that we have released you from

> mourning, you are still not visible in the community? No, that's not how things are done."] Yes, they said you have now been released so now you need to be visible you see? I had just been remaining behind in my house, but they came to reprimand me and say no, this is not how things are done. When you have been released, be visible, and go be amongst people again. Don't hide yourself in this house.

Much of what MaSkhosana said spoke to the visibility needed in maintaining communal ties and relations. This is in stark contrast with what she became accustomed to while in mourning. Ukubonakala – visibility – according to other women, was an integral part in ensuring that MaSkhosana became a part of the community again.

Many of the women demonstrated that they would work hand in hand with other women to farm and sell their surplus. Classed navigations of widowhood were seemingly straightforward for many of the women interviewed. Many did not encounter any issues with wills as many of their husband's died intestate or did not leave behind sizeable assets. Many of the women were also not severely impacted by the issues of inheritances or wills because they had long been used to providing for their households with little to no assistance from their partners. It became apparent that when women referred to ukuhlalela ilifa labantwana bam [remaining rooted at the homestead to protect their children's inheritance and livelihoods], they were often actually referring to protecting what they (as the women) had built, negotiated for, and maintained for their children.

4.6 Ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwana bam: Re-marriage and negotiations for dignity

Ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwama bam can loosely be translated to 'remaining rooted for the purposes of protecting the legacy, inheritance, property, and dignity of one's children'. This is a theme that was found to be significant in how many of the women have now come to make sense of their lives, and how they negotiate for dignity and respect within their marital homes. This notion of ukuhlala did not seem to merely suggest a remaining at the marital home in the passive sense, regardless of circumstance, but rather remaining rooted in one's life as a way of preserving dignity and respect. Many of the women relied on this to explain their reasons for

choosing to remain unmarried, even when some were younger women when their husbands passed on. Some of the reasoning was because they had been advised to do so during the processes of releasing them from mourning, and this also became an integral part in how they envisioned advising other younger widowed women. Other women relied on this notion to explain the ways in which they still needed to bargain for isidima [human dignity] with their in-laws, in order to guarantee that certain traditional rites of passage for their children were conducted.

Of the 14 widows, none had chosen to remarry. One participant expressed that they currently had a romantic partner, but further clarified that she had made efforts to ensure that this relationship remained unknown to her children, and that she had no desire to remarry.

4.6.1 "Ndiphinde ndiyoqala ubomi obutsha? Hayi andisoze": Disdain for re-marriage

The questions surrounding re-marriage were often met with surprise and shock from the participants. Some of the reasons cited against re-marriage were the prior hurtful experiences of marriage, as well as wanting to protect their children from ill-treatment if they were to choose to remarry. MaNcobeni was widowed relatively young, at the age of 34. She expressed that even at that age, re-marriage was not something that she had thought of, and that this was because of her having listened to iziyalo [advice or counsel] by her mother:

> No, I never remarried. It was never even something I thought of. I thought to myself that I would stay. I would stay here with my children. [chuckles] I was helped by my own mother's advice. And what I think helped me, was the fact that my husband passed when I was still young, I was 34 years. So, when people would say anything, I would be fearful. My mom said "You see my child, children argue and fight when they share the same father, you know? It gets difficult. How much more difficult will it be when you then have another [husband]? I advise you to not have another child, do you understand?"

When asked about her reasons for choosing to remain single, MaJola explained that:

> No, I do not have any reasons. But it is not my wish at all. I can't now just because my husband has passed on, ndiphinde ndiyoqala obunye ubomi obutsha [decide to go and start a new life again]. No, I could never.

MaSkhosana:

> Yho! No, I could never get married ever again! There is nothing that would make me desire marriage. Because I am here with my children, raising my grandchildren, so there is nothing that necessitates me going into marriage. To go and subject myself to abuse again? No, no no! It's white people that do those things [remarriage]; us Xhosa people don't do that.

Many of the participants shared similar views to MaSkhosana, MaJola, and MaNcobeni, explaining that remarriage would be akin to starting a new life, and possibly subjecting your children to ill-treatment. For MaSkhosana, remarriage was also something that she considered foreign to what she had grown up seeing and believing about black people in general, and Xhosa people particularly.

Choosing to not remarry or partake in romantic relations was also a determinant of umhlolokazi oziphethe kakhle, the idea that a widow conducted herself well. When asked what being umhlolokazi meant to them and the advice they would give to others, MaJola and MamGqwashu noted that:

MaJola:

> If you are umhlolokazi, inkunzi ikuwe ukuba uziphathe kakhle. [The prerogative is on you, to conduct yourself with good behaviour]. Mmh, uziphathe kakuhle [to conduct yourself with good behaviour], because there are many things that you will encounter outside in the world. There are even Ben 10s (younger men) that will ruin your life, you know? You need to be uMama wase nkonzweni [a mother in the church]. You must be a mother of your household and of your children.

MamGqwashu:

> I would advise them [a young widow] uziphatha kakuhle. And if she was married with children, to raise her children well with respect, ngokunga henyuzi. Uku henyuza ke kukuthandana. [By not gallivanting around and dating.] Yes, they're still young and they are not my age, but they must respect their children. Children don't like it when one minute there's one father, and the next there's another. They will never welcome that. I would advise them to stay rooted in prayer even with the raising of her children. God will bless her abundantly, over and above.

Overall, the participants demonstrated an overwhelming view that being a 'good' widow, and perhaps by extension, being a 'good' woman and mother, required one to remain rooted at their marital home. This was linked with conceptions of good behaviour, which included being a praying woman, as well as avoiding being known as a woman who frequently gallivants in public, or one who embarks on romantic relationships.

4.6.2 Ukuhlala as a strategic mode of bargaining for isidima and their children's wellbeing

MaNdala noted that if she were to advise a younger widow, she would advise them to respect their position as the wife that they came to that homestead to be.

> I would advise them in terms of my own journey of widowhood, because I have also remained in this homestead. I have never left, and I am also not one to gallivant up and down. I had never been one to be out and about even when I was still newly widowed in my mourning dress. I would advise them in that way, because I am still umhlolokazi who has always remained in this yard. Yes, because when you are umhlolokazi usenoku hlala kaloku uhombhele lento yobufazi qha yodwa [you should at least remain in the homestead if only to give your position as a wife, dignity and respect].

Some of the stories told by the women demonstrated that they utilised their identities as abafazi and ooMama to negotiate for their children's dignity and legacies within their paternal families. When speaking about cultural ceremonies and rites of passage that need to be done for children, MaSukude expressed:

> Even here inside the house, even when this person did not usually do certain things, there are days when you will think of them, and feel that "No man, if only this person was here". But now when loTata is no longer here, and you are the one that is present, you can even hear about certain things in passing. That a ceremony or event is being planned in the family. Or you don't even hear about it at all, but you will be told by your child that Dabawo [the paternal aunt] called saying at a certain date this and this will be taking place. Even when it comes to [traditional] things for our children. We grew up as amaXhosa, and there are certain things that you know you can't speak to your neighbour about. I have spoken about it to my family, but in order for it to be done right, it needs to be done kokwabo [at their paternal home]. So, I need to sit down and strategize about when I am going to go

> there and humble myself to plead for them, because what do I want? For this child's ceremony to be done, and for it to be successful. Because impilo yalomntana [this child's health and well-being], is where? At their paternal home. When this child is there visiting, I don't know what that family might be thinking. At times, I need to ensure that I avail myself, even though I know that they no longer need me there. I am just protecting my child. At his own family. Those are the things that umhlolokazi finds themselves dealing with. Around, if something is happening, even if there is another troublesome child, a neighbour's child for example. When that incident is being concluded on it's always a matter of "iyawa ngulamntana walomhlolokazi." ["Once again, it is the child of this widow."]

MaNcobeni also explained the idea of needing to bargain for isidima, as it pertains to the community and marital family.

> How can I put this? You know, I don't know whether it's because people now think that by virtue of you having lost your husband, siyehla isidima sakho. [Your dignity diminishes]. You see? Do you see that? So then there's that you see? Maybe a plan is being made to host something here [at the homestead], and you will not be told about it. For example, someone will say that this thing needs to be done here, maybe there was a traditional ceremony – amagqirha [healers]. Maybe this healer will say, because there is going to be this ceremony that is going to take place, certain things will need to be done. They will say all this to my brother-in-law, and not to me.

For MamCirha and MamBhele, they found themselves not only bargaining for isidima in relation to their marital families, but also in relation to their communities.

MamCirha:

> Don't even go there! You know all of these things require my attention. To the extent that sometimes things that need to be done for the house end up failing. You see there at the kraal, there are cows there. Anyway, there are not many of them, there are four of them. But although there are now four of them, one of them will be leaving. I almost lost another of them to another young man who tried to take it from me. I went to the police station. In fact, I thought to myself that I don't want anyone going [to the police station] on my behalf, and I will go put my statement down myself, because I am able to see what is happening. Indeed, the cow was returned, and it is now in the kraal. What I mean to say is that it is not easy, it is really not easy. Especially with matters relating to things of the kraal, no it is very difficult. In the evenings I need to ensure that all of the cows are safely in the yard, but I have hired uMsuthu [a helper to shepherd the livestock].

MamBhele:

> Yho the life of widowhood, my child, is not nice. Yho it's not nice. Because when you are umhlolokazi… When you have a husband, regardless of what the situation is in your relationship, he is the one place where you could seek refuge and protection, you see? Even if someone was thinking of bad things towards you, they resist or don't do it because they have that fear of landoda yapha, [the man of that house].

For many of the women, similar views to MamCirha, MaSukude, and MaNcobeni were expressed, where they felt that there was a shift in the social stratification and hierarchy, and that they had resultantly lost isidima sabo. Remaining rooted at the homestead in order to continue to expand it and safeguard it, were some of the ways in which they bargained and negotiated for isidima. For MamBhele, MamCirha and MaSukude, their partners were seldomly physically present in the household at the time of their passing, but the knowledge that there were indeed patriarchal figures in the household (albeit absent) was still enough to guarantee isidima of the household, thus giving them a sense of safety. However, the passing of their husbands somewhat lessened or revoked isidima, making them vulnerable to ill-treatment with their families and some members of the community. Isidima of the household was intrinsically linked to securing the safety and wellness of their children, and themselves.

The experience of bargaining for isidima was however different for some women. This was seemingly due to their positions of seniority within their homesteads. MamJwarha and MamGqwashu were prime examples of this. MamJwarha explained that for her, nothing had changed in her relations:

> Nothing has changed. I am both the mother, and the father. Yes, to the extent that ndangeniswa nasebuhlanti [was allowed to enter the kraal].

MamGqwashu explained that at her in-laws:

> I still have the opportunity to voice things even now, emzini wam [at my in-laws]. I am umfazi omkhulu [the senior wife]. Starting from the top right until the bottom, my voice still stands.

For MamBhele, galvanizing her identity as the wife was also important in ensuring that her daughter's lobola negotiations were handled successfully:

> Now that my husband has passed away, there has not really been anything that has been significantly affected. Nothing has been affected. Because even when the delegation for my daughter's lobola negotiations was set to arrive, I had to place ixakatho [a woman's shawl/blanket worn by a wife to culturally display respect] on my shoulders. Because that situation does not concern me – my daughter is not mine, ngowa lapha [her identity lies at her paternal home].

MamCirha had been separated from her husband years prior to his passing. When she built her home, it was with the use of her savings from years of working as a vendor at the local market, and with no help from her husband. MamCirha lamented on how even when her husband returned to the village prior to his passing, he unknowingly travelled right past the house, unaware of the new home that had been built by MamCirha. When asked about how the passing of her husband impacted the ways in which the household was run, MamCirha added to the number of responses that indicated that even whilst married, provision and single parenting is often undertaken by women:

> No, it didn't affect me in any way because I was already used to working for myself. I was already used to working for myself, my kids were dependent on me to raise and provide for them. What I'm saying is, there was nothing that was strange once he passed away because even while he was alive, I was doing things for myself, you see? While he was alive. To the extent that even now, do you know that even when bekuvulwa lomzi, they need to say whose house this is, and it is his, as per Xhosa culture you see? They say ngumzi ka [husband's name excluded] lo. Do you see? But I built this house while he was away. I built it ngamandla am [with my labour], but now you just go along with it for the sake of the children, you understand?

Ukuvulwa komzi is a ceremony which is done to introduce the new home to that homestead's ancestors and seek protection and blessings over it. Although MamCirha had built the house on her own, it was opened up as a homestead of her marital clan. MamCirha accepted this for the sake of her children.

What the above sentiments show us is that ukuhlala is enshrined in the idea of respecting one's status and position in the homestead. For the women interviewed, although they are now widowed, there are inseparable ties to their in-laws as wives that they occasionally make use of in order to perform certain actions as mothers.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter documented the themes that were present and significant for this study, through the interviews conducted with the 15 participants. Through the research process, it was found that the very conception of who the widow is in the African world sense, is tenuous. This is because although one may be said to have been divorced, separated, or unmarried, ties with the deceased's family persist, particularly in the presence of children.

Much of what this chapter demonstrates is that the core of how the participants come to conceptualise their widowhood is through motherhood and ubufazi. What comes to enshrine a widow who conducts herself well, is one who remains rooted in prayer, and remains rooted in her homestead by avoiding public displays of romantic relations or avoiding remarriage altogether, and also protects the dignity and wellbeing of her children. The findings indicate that the main tenets of widows' navigations of their everyday lives are the ways in which they draw on relations built prior to widowhood – familial or otherwise. Their ways of bargaining for or maintaining isidima for themselves and their children often emanate from their positions within the homestead as mothers and wives.

These women demonstrate the ways in which communal ties amongst women are able to create sustainable livelihoods. They rely on strategic interactions that ensure that they are involved in stokvels and that they are visible in the community through ukuyovela – attending communal gatherings such as funerals and the like to provide support in the form of labour, finances, or in the simplest sense, one's presence. In these modes of conduct, lending from Motsemme (2011: 104), the participants demonstrated 'ukuphanda', "in search of extending their horizons to rehumanize their conditions of existence".

The following chapter will further engage with the experiences put forth by the participants, and make a case for citizenship experiences that are rooted in an understanding of

spirituality, how women negotiate for isidima, as well as the varied ways in which women are able to create livelihoods through their own networks.

Chapter Five

Ukuyovela nokuhlala: Tenuous widowhood, feminist economic realities and sites of belonging after mourning

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the various themes presented in Chapter Four and will engage the ways in which these themes provide insight into Xhosa widows' experiences and navigations of citizenship once the mourning period of ukuzila has ended. Firstly, this chapter will discuss the tenuous nature of the widowhood identity. This will be done through engaging the ways in which the widow identity may be said to be contentious because of the various paths to widowhood, in the context of the complex nature of partnerships. Secondly, a significant part of mourning is the public perception of the widow, particularly through the identifiable marker of the black mourning dress, as shown in Chapter Two. The aesthetics of mourning will be explored as an entry-point to understanding the different forms of mourning dress amongst amaXhosa, what ukuzila may mean for women who forego the public imagery associated with mourning dress entirely, as well as the hierarchies amongst those who wear black mourning dress and those who wear amadakhi (navy German print mourning dress). Thirdly, the economic and communal experiences of widowhood will be engaged. This will be done through an examination of the notion of feminist economies and the ways in which black women provide new understandings of modes of sustainable living. Lastly, I will demonstrate that widows utilise their identities of wifehood and motherhood in choosing to remain rooted at their marital homesteads through the concepts of ukuhlalela ilifa [remaining at the homestead for the purposes of protecting the inheritance] and ukuhlalela isidima [remaining at the homestead for the purposes of protecting dignity]. These concepts have been explained in the previous chapter. It will be shown that these concepts form part of livelihood strategies aimed at securing and protecting their families' sites of belonging. Through an engagement with what a metaphysical understanding of belonging allows us to see for Xhosa widows, ukuhlala as a mode of remaining rooted at the homestead will be explored as an everyday navigation of belonging, access to land rights and resources, and ultimately, of citizenship. The main aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the conceptions of

citizenship for Xhosa widows lie in their everyday navigations of their interactions with other women, as well as a recognition of their own labour. This lies in stark contrast to where the discipline of Political Studies has historically positioned widowhood.

5.2 Tenuous widowhood: Negotiations of identities

It is often assumed that for one to be considered a widow, a marriage must have occurred (Bennett and Pereira, 2013). This creates a particular public imagination of who the widow can be, as a figure in society. In the previous chapter, my interactions with my research participants pointed me towards a more nuanced understanding of widowhood that highlighted the complexities of partnerships in the South African context.

Chapter Two of the study outlined the work of marriage in African societies, and how marriage ascribes status and access to good womanhood. Olaore and Agwu (2020) make the argument that good womanhood is tied to the woman's ability to justify the cost of marrying her, rather than her being a person who is worthy of dignity and respect. Claims to widowhood, therefore, are extensions of this labour, where women often need to negotiate for their dignity and respect. The findings of this study demonstrate that claims to widowhood and widowhood rites alike are contestable, because of the complexities of partnerships in democratic South Africa. Therefore, as argued by Bennett and Pereira (2013), the dominant assumption that widowhood presupposes marriage is not true to this context.

For many of the participants, customary marriage had been the first to take place. When asked what this entailed, they explained the known process of lobola [bride price] negotiations between the two families, to initiate a marriage. The participants went on to explain what being married customarily meant amongst amaXhosa, and explained the processes mentioned by Bongela (2001) of ukuyalwa, where the bride is given elder counsel and dressed in traditional makoti regalia, and is introduced to the homestead's ancestors through ukutyiswa kotsiki [a piece of meat that comes from a part of a goat]. Culturally, many of these practices serve to introduce and welcome the new bride to the homestead's ancestors. Marriage does not only take place between two people and their families, but also emphasises affinities with the ancestors. For the women who had civil marriages, these took place after the customary rites had been performed. In this regard, MamJwarha and MamNgwevu explained that they later went on to sign legal

marriage documents for the purposes of gaining access to land that was being allocated to families who wished to settle in the Tsholomnqa area at the time. This allowed the women to gain access to land rights at the time, but the marriages had already been legitimized by their families and their ancestors through customary marriage.

The tensions that lie within partnerships become ever-more visible once the husband has passed. The case of Lerato Sengadi and her contentious marriage to late musician Jabulani Tsambo, commonly known as HHP, demonstrated the ways in which widowhood is a tenuous identity, because marriage is also contentious. Upon the death of HHP in October 2018, Sengadi entered a court battle to prevent HHP's family from burying him without her consent. She succeeded and an interdict was granted (Tjiya, 2020). The family did not recognise Sengadi as 'their' wife, claiming that lobola had not been concluded. This marks a tension in the ways that the family perceived the relationship, demonstrating the idea that each homestead may have their own way of conducting customary practices. As such, The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998) continues to be a site of debate, given that its ambiguous position on when a customary marriage can be said to have been concluded, and its tension with the varying beliefs and traditions of families (Lebitse, 2018). At the end of a two-year battle, the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) ruled that Sengadi was indeed the late HHP's customary wife.

In *Usable Traditions: Creating Sexual Autonomy in Post-apartheid South Africa*, Livermon (2015:17) examines the use of 'tradition' by black queer South Africans to demonstrate the fluidity and changing nature of customary African practices, and thus "insist on their rights to exist within explicit African cultural frameworks." Livermon (2015) demonstrates that, because of the fixation on ascribing African-ness, terms such as 'African custom', 'African tradition', and 'African culture' are often used interchangeably and the definitions of what constitute African culture and tradition are presented in tautological terms. Importantly, Livermon (2015:19) argues that this interchangeability offers a "space of flexibility through which they contest restrictive definitions of African culture and tradition and, by doing so, provide a space for the reimagination of African customary law."

Of all the participants, MaSukude was the only one to have been legally divorced from her late husband. MaSukude's ex-husband had since re-married, but she was still recognised as a widow. What this demonstrates is that even in the absence of a legal document proving marriage,

as in the case of Lerato Sengadi, claims to widowhood may still be made. Particularly relevant in this case, is the late Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. A stalwart of the struggle against apartheid, Mama Winnie was married to Tata Nelson Mandela under civil and customary law in 1958. Dlamini (2018) details Mama Winnie's last battle prior to her death, as one that was against the "historical perversion by colonial authorities of customary law to women's equal rights to land". Upon their customary marriage, Mama Winnie was allocated a nine-hectare site in rural Qunu, and although they subsequently divorced, their customary marriage remained extant until Tata had claimed his lobola, as per AbaThembu custom (Dlamini, 2018). In 1997, this land was donated to Tata Mandela without her consent, by then Minister of Land Affairs Derek Hanekom. The case of Mama Winnie was exacerbated by Western stereotypes of exclusive ownership and male dominance which have historically rendered women's rights to land as "legally invisible" (Dlamini, 2018). It was under the auspices of the customary marriage that had taken place, that Mama Winnie felt she had rightful claims to ownership of the site in Qunu. In these cases, we see that women have also insisted on their rights to exist within explicit African cultural frameworks (Livermon, 2015), and use these to make claims to their widowhood.

In the study, MaRadebe was the only woman who had never married, but had cohabited with her husband since 1994. Although they never married, she had had a child with him, and was known in the community that they had lived in for all those years, as a widow. MaRadebe's position as a widow is tenuous because:

> Azange ndizile. Kodwa ke esifihlweni ndahlaliswa pha as umntu next to iCoffin. Njengamntu otshatileyo kodwa akazange ndinxityiswe.

Translated loosely, MaRadebe states: "I never mourned, but at the funeral, I was made to sit there as the person next to the coffin. As a person who was married but was never customarily introduced as the makoti."

The language that MaRadebe uses here, is an admission of sorts that alerts us to the importance that lies in ukunxityiswa – being married customarily and being known by the ancestors of that homestead as a wife. This implies that there is a clear emphasis on being

recognised and acknowledged by the homestead to gain access to mourning rites. However, although she had not mourned through dress, MaRadebe explained that her way of mourning was to abstain from romantic relationships, opting to remain with her children, and the children within her family. Although MaRadebe was made to sit next to the coffin in the position that a wife would, she was not expected to mourn through mourning dress. Hunter (2016) notes that although the context of South Africa is one in which marriage has been marked by a series of absences, in its declining rates, increases in divorce rates, and the impact of migration – it is still present. I argue, therefore, that although many of the women mourned in their varying ways, which at times did not include mourning dress, ukunxityiswa is still seen as an important practice as a new makoti, and later emerges as a practice at the beginning of one's journey as umhlolokazi. These aesthetic dimensions of dress, and more particularly, mourning dress, will be elaborated on in the next section.

5.3 Aesthetics of mourning

Although the paths to widowhood may vary, and be tenuous in nature, the importance placed on the public nature of mourning is one that persisted throughout the insights shared by the research participants. The insights shared in the previous chapter demonstrated that the nature of ukuzila was markedly contradictory. The behaviour, demeanour, and as this research has demonstrated, mourning dress, are some of the markers of mourners. In public, the widow is required to be visible in her mourning, insofar as others may be able to identify her as a woman in mourning, but she also needs to demonstrate respect by avoiding public places and observing a time of stillness and quiet. Mourning dress clearly plays a significant role in identifying a widow as a woman in mourning.

Only four of the participants did not wear mourning dress. For one of them, this was because of religious reasons, and for the remainder, it was due to estranged relations with the family due to having been separated or divorced from their partners. One participant, who had cohabited with their partner for many years, also did not wear mourning dress. The significance here is that, although these participants did not wear mourning dress of any kind, they still maintained that they were in mourning, due to the ways in which they conducted themselves during that period. These participants referred to this as ukuzila ngokwe nhliziyo, or ukuzila

ngaphakathi, the ways in which they maintained the mourning practice internally, through practicing restraint and avoidance, as opposed to an outward display of mourning through mourning dress.

The previous chapter demonstrated that the mourning dress that is frequently worn by Xhosa widows is the black mourning dress (Magudu, 2004). In neighbouring Botswana, the navy German print dress, known as the Shweshwe print is also worn during mourning but those who wear navy often operate under the same suspicion that is usually reserved for those who do not wear mourning dress at all (Durham and Klaits, 2002). In Chapter Two, the gendered nature of grief work, and more specifically, black mourning dress was further emphasised, with the work of Danforth (1982), Taylor (1983), and Rappaport (2003). Danforth (1982) argues that the closer one was to the deceased, the closer one's clothing would be to black, and that where men often only wore a lapel pin for a brief period of time, women needed to observe the custom of mourning dress, and for longer periods of time. Much of the emphasis then, in the global sense of the literature, is placed on black mourning dress. The origins of this custom is said to emanate from Queen Victoria's time of mourning when she undertook to mourn through the wearing of black mourning dress. In the African context, there is very little literature that refers to widows who mourn wearing the navy blue dress referred to in Durham and Klaits (2002), which is known as idakhi (singular) or amadakhi (plural) amongst amaXhosa.

In the findings, those participants who wore black mourning dress, often voiced dissatisfaction with those who had worn amadakhi. A clear hierarchy of mourning emerged, when some participants felt that those who wear amadakhi had not performed ukuzila in its strictest sense. MamGqwashu shared that she had felt that the wearing of amadakhi during mourning was a product of recent times. While MamGqwashu did not explicitly state her reasoning, the dynamic nature of cultural beliefs regarding mourning dress may be noted in the ways in which various familial or religious beliefs are able to be accommodated within the paradigm of ukuzila as a cultural practice.

In South Africa, however, it is not taboo to see women wearing amadakhi, as their mourning dress. The participants wore this kind of dress for various reasons. MaJola made note of how she had worn amadakhi because she had had twins. According to MaJola, a woman who has twin children does not mourn, as per Xhosa custom. The family gave her a choice not to

mourn, but she chose to do so, feeling as though foregoing any kind of mourning dress at all, would feel as though she did not love, or value her husband. The sentiment was to publicly display her mourning, so as to avoid suspicion or negative stigmas towards her at a later stage. Amadakhi were a better alternative for her. Those who wore amadakhi during ukuzila would undergo a cleansing ceremony as is usually done, referred to as ukukhululwa kwezila or ukuchithwa kwezila. This cleansing ceremony, marked by 'washing off' the period of mourning at a nearby river and donning brand-new clothing, has been detailed in the previous section. This ceremony of releasing the widow from mourning marks a reintegration into society. One participant noted that wearing amadakhi after removing the black mourning dress, felt as though they were umtshakazi – a new bride, or ikrwala, a newly initiated young man from boyhood into adulthood. The ways in which these transitions were described were interesting in their likeness to other periods which may be considered as customary or rites of passage for many in the Xhosa culture. These periods are considered significant stages in one's journey of becoming or acquiring 'full' womanhood and manhood (Bongela, 2001).

Amongst amaXhosa, these various modes of dress carry meaning, with each item symbolizing a manner of conduct and acting as a reminder of the ways in which one should conduct themselves as a new bride, or a recently widowed woman. Mourning dress acts as a public identifier of the widow and is perceived to be intricately linked to the ways in which she conducts herself. Therefore, it can be argued that the public perception of the 'adequate' performance of custom and its ability to ascribe personhood and dignity, relies heavily on the aesthetic of mourning both during and after ukuzila. However, the tenuous nature of partnerships, and by extension of widowhood, where one can claim ukuzila through observances of avoidance rather than mourning dress, demonstrate the dynamic nature of the cultural practice of ukuzila.

5.4 Woman-centred networks as feminist economies

Mourning and grief work, requires a period of momentary seclusion. It is believed that one must, during the period of ukuzila, excuse themselves from public life, and retreat as a mode of demonstrating respect by avoidance. This is markedly different to the ways in which the women conducted their lives prior to the deaths of their partners. Ukuzila, as an official mourning period,

ruptured the research participants' mode of fashioning a sustainable livelihood. Some of the women indicated that they needed to go and report within their various societies and stokvels, when they had concluded their periods of mourning. One of the participants indicated that elderly women from the community came to fetch her from her home because she had secluded herself from the community long after she had been released from mourning. The women that had come to visit, reprimanded her, and told her of the need to re-emerge in society, ayovela (to attend communal gatherings, and be seen and recognised).

Much of the period immediately after mourning consists of re-building the ties that were created prior to widowhood, with other women and the community. For the participants interviewed, post-mourning life had little to do with negotiating the classed struggle of wills and inheritances, although this was a struggle for some. Rather, the women were more concerned with the lived reality of social welfare grants failing to meet the needs of their dependents, and with the reality that the legal fraternity is out of reach and an expensive undertaking for many South Africans in general. The women interviewed as part of this research demonstrated that modes of sustainable living are created through the use of woman-centred networks, which are usually formulated within the spheres of the church, amongst those that were within their cohort during the times that they got married, as well as women in the community through imigalelo (stokvels), burial societies, and farming co-operatives.

In Chapter Two, the theory of matrifocality was posited as a lens through which to look at how, even in patrilineal societies, a matricentric principle in household organisation existed (Amadiume, 1987). "The gender ideology governing economic production was that of female industriousness" (Amadiume, 1987: 27). The theory of matrifocality allows us to see women's economic production as central in sustaining an independent household. A significant finding is that much of how widows negotiate their citizenship, is through a negotiation for their livelihoods through the households that they have built and maintained. Motsemme (2011) explains the concept of 'ukuphanta' or 'ukuphanda', connoting the English word, to 'hustle'. In her work, Motsemme (2011: 70) explains that in drawing from social theories that allow for the "explorations of how human beings create a sense that life is worth living and celebrating, we also enlarge and deepen our current epistemic frameworks to understand African women's contemporary lives and experiences." Motsemme's work is important in our understanding of

how African women come to create livelihood strategies, because of the claim that efforts that include 'ukuphanda' may be read as ways of "maintaining a very different sense of selfhood and identity while operating within the limitations of hostile hegemonic forces and ultimately as a way to build an alternative experience of humanity, of participation in society, of citizenship" (Motsemme, 2011: 118).

In her article; *Becoming Postcolonial: African women changing the meaning of citizenship*, McFadden (2005: 2) uses the political climate of Zimbabwe as a case study, and argues that

> "[I]n the twenty-first century, we are confronted with the reality of both the collapse of neocolonialism and the need to craft new social and political systems that will fulfill the needs of millions of African people, including African women, who, by and large, were excluded from the benefits of independence."

The argument here is that the dominant notion of citizenship that presently persists in Africa has been derived largely from the colonial practice that thrived in its attachment of whiteness, maleness, and the ownership of property, to the status of citizenship. The work of Motsemme (2011) allows us to engage a context wherein African women then build alternative experiences of humanity, participation in society, and of citizenship.

The capitalist neoliberal economy in its inception, is exclusionary – regulating participation amongst those who are privileged to function within the formal economy. Within the context of South Africa however, participation within the economy, through formal employment is not guaranteed because of the lack of job creation. Amid all of this, women forge alternative modes of survival. In a study of African migrants to China, Magadla (2021) alerts us to how African women do not just live within the economy but are constitutive of it. These livelihoods are functions of feminist economic realities. Where the state is not enough, they utilise their own networks and strategies. The Association of Women's Rights In Development (AWID) (2020) contends that building feminist economies is about building new paradigms of just economies. The premise of feminist economies is to recognise feminist economic realities and resist the exploitative and unjust nature of market-based neo-liberal economics. Abelenda, Amuno, Kidane, Mapondera, Music, and Garzon (2020) argue that marginalised communities in the global South, and the global North respond to intersecting forms of oppression. Through

networks of mutual aid, and land occupations that resist land privatisation amongst others, Abelanda et al (2020) draws from examples of strategies employed by groups of women in India, Mexico and women farmers across West Africa.

I argue that the strategies of livelihood creation used by the women in this study, including stokvels, farming co-operatives, and burial societies, form part of their feminist economies. These strategies are invisibilized within existing neo-liberal economics, when these strategies are in fact some of the main forms of livelihood creation for black South African women. The notion of feminist economies is not limited to material/economic resources, but extends to encompass key social (non-economic) resources such as shared domestic and emotional labour, communal motherhood, and community support- enshrined in the concept of ukuyovela.

Woman-centred networks became sites of refuge for many of the women interviewed, because they knew that they could rely on these in times of struggle. My own memory is of the women in my family making use of grocery stokvels, when it came to occasions such as Christmas. You would be certain that at Christmas time, food would be bought in bulk to provide for family members that would make their way from far and wide to celebrate in one home. These societies are the entities that have made it possible for many black South Africans to fashion livelihoods that can conceive of celebration, excitement, and joy.

The idea of woman-centred networks to craft feminist economies is one that is in direct opposition to the notion of the nuclear family unit and how this has been emphasised in the crafting of a South African nationalism. In this section, I argue that the period of widowhood requires a greater reliance on the networks that have been negotiated for, and built, prior to widowhood. For many of the women in the study, the feeling of playing a dual role within the household since the passing of their partners was a widely noted sentiment. Interestingly, this dual role was only mentioned in terms of its significance in feeling secure in the knowledge of there being a patriarchal figure in the household. When the women spoke of their dual role however, it was seldom accompanied with woes of not being able to secure livelihoods or provide for their families, because they had been fulfilling these duties even while their partners were alive. For many of the women, aligning themselves with other women in the community, became a key part of ensuring that this continued.

I argue that this alignment, and by extension, the women's feminist economic realities, do not only take place within the sphere of receiving monetary or grocery returns within the various kinds of stokvels, but also through the idea of labour exchanges, as posited in the notion of ukuyovela. Ukuyovela can be understood as one's presence or attendance at gatherings, often lending a helping hand through the provision of labour, or simply just being present to support the family. In the findings, many of the women noted the relations that they had nurtured with other women, and how being there for one another in tangible and intangible ways was key to how they were able to reintegrate into their communities once they had passed the period of mourning.

Letshego Zulu, in *I Choose to Live: The Gugu Zulu Story* (2019), details the ways she coped with the tragic passing of her husband, Gugu Zulu. In the book, Zulu highlights how the broader circle of family and friends that herself and Gugu had, stepped in and filled the gap upon his passing. It was through this community that she was able to navigate her everyday life, such as returning to work, raising their daughter, Lelethu, and embarking on a new business venture, all while being in the public eye as the widow of Gugu Zulu (Zulu, 2019). What was striking however, is how Letshego relayed the role played by her mother during this time. Zulu writes:

> "Sometimes I would feel guilty asking her for help so often, but I had to learn not to entertain those thoughts. Supporting each other is a key part of life and I know that one day I will have the opportunity to return the favour." (2019: 58)

What Zulu (2019) underscores is a deeply embedded notion of community, in showing up for another, and hoping that one day one will be able to return the favour. This is a sentiment that lies at the heart of what MaSkhosana referred to in the imperative of ukuyovela: in order to maintain communal ties and relations, one needs to be visible, and provide support in the ways that they used to, prior to their periods of ukuzila. Ukuyovela is done with the idea that one day, you too might require the same support. This explains why adjusting to new modes of living in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic for example, was difficult for many, particularly in the context of death and the support required to comfort the bereaved. Calling the elderly women in your family to appeal to them to not attend imithandazo (the prayer meetings that take place leading up to the funeral), and funerals in general, has been an exercise that we previously could have never imagined necessary.

Many of the women detailed their reliance on God and the church both during and after the period of ukuzila, as their sources of strength, similarly to the Manyano women in Ngcobozi's (2017) study. During their periods of ukuzila marked by seclusion and silences, prayer, song, and the church were key sites of refuge and renewed strength. In addition to an avoidance of remarriage, a widow that conducts themselves with good behaviour is one that remains rooted in prayer and raises their children through prayer. MamGqwashu, who was given permission by her brother-in-law to sing the Methodist Church hymn *Umbhedesho wemini yecawa* along with the congregation at her husband's funeral, felt as though she was sanctified in that moment, a significant moment because of her time of pain and grief. Much like MamGqwashu, even those women who were not regular church goers expressed that faith in God was a key part of how they coped with mourning. Prayer, then, was spoken of as a mode to cast one's daily struggles to God. Many of the women felt as though they were never alone, with God on their side, and that it was because of this relationship, along with fellowship ties from church, and in the community, that they were able to navigate their everyday lives.

Nurturing communal ties are the prisms through which everyday life is envisioned. The African sociological underpinnings of ubuntu, where umntu ngumntu ngabantu [a person is a person through other people], is one which Zulu (2019) also borrows from to explain how the relationships and friendships that she had built over the years became so much more valuable in her time of loss. The idea that as human beings, we do not live in isolation, is a key factor in post-mourning life.

5.5 Ukuhlala: Remaining rooted as protection of labour and maintenance of isidima

The notion of ukuhlala in the context of this research may be loosely translated to mean staying or remaining rooted in the marital homestead. While this notion may be falsely read as ukubukezela/ukunyamezela (endurance) in the passive sense, the findings demonstrate that this was not the case with the women interviewed. When the participants spoke of ukuhlala, it was in protection and maintenance of ilifa and isidima sabantwana. While it is possible to translate ilifa as the English word, inheritance, I argue that the links made between ilifa and isidima are because of the recognition of a particular kind of wellness and livelihood that lies at one's ancestral home or with one's ancestral ties. When the women chose to remain at their marital

homes or continued to make efforts to ensure that their children had access to their paternal homesteads, they did so in recognition of what they could bargain for by maintaining links to the patrilineal family.

To avoid the victim versus agent binary, I argue that, while it is possible to read the women's notions of ukuhlala with an understanding that notions of ukubekezela or ukunyamezela are present, participants also understood the bargaining power that remaining rooted at the marital homestead provides for them. Ukuhlala, is therefore in protection of what the women have built throughout their time at the homestead. It is a recognition of the investments that they have made for themselves and their children. These investments are not only material, but include the labour that has gone into constructions of 'good' womanhood, and nurturing ancestral ties for the benefit of their children.

In Chapter Two, the work of Bongela (2001) was used to demonstrate that ukuyalwa, as a process of being given elderly counsel, is one of the ways in which a young makoti is inducted into wifehood. As when the young woman becomes a new bride, the practice also takes place in many households when a woman has been recently widowed. Many of the participants, particularly those who were older, described that they were given elderly counsel in how to conduct themselves as widows. This, along with iziyalo from their inductions as new wives, impacted the ways that they navigated their lives in the post-mourning period as widows. A recurrent theme in how the women were advised in their widowhood, was to remain at their homestead and avoid being known by the community as a woman who gallivants around and demonstrates promiscuity. The key to 'good widowhood' was ukuhlala.

Ukuhlala was referred to in two ways by the participants. The first pertains to a disdain for remarriage, and the second points towards an understanding of ukuhlala as bargaining for and securing isidima and ilifa of their children. None of the widows interviewed had ever remarried. Only one of them reported to have a romantic partner but expressed that she had taken cautions to prevent this partnership from being known to her children as such. Additionally, she had no intentions of ever re-marrying. Another expressed that although she did not currently have a romantic partner, if she were to have one, she would like this partner to be a widower. She too, did not wish to remarry, lamenting on her painful experience with her in-laws upon the passing of her husband. MaSkhosana, for example, expressed that "there is nothing that would make me

desire marriage. Because I am here with my children, raising my grandchildren, so there is nothing that necessitates me going into marriage."

Avoiding remarriage was not only a way to remain rooted at the marital homestead, but also as a key factor in being a widow who conducts herself with good behaviour. Interestingly, an avoidance of remarriage and engaging in romantic partnerships, in favour of focusing on one's children was also part of the advice that some of the widows felt that they would offer to young widows. Engaging in romantic relations however, for many of the participants interviewed, seemed taboo not only because they thought themselves too elderly, but also because they associated remarriage with the beginning of a new life, and the labour required in being a makoti, as MamJwarha explained in the previous chapter. Many had never thought about engaging in romantic relationships even as recently widowed women, because of their experiences of marriage. Some of which were abusive, and unpleasant. An avoidance of re-marriage, therefore, was not because the women necessarily found themselves incapable of exercising their sexual agency, but because they found romantic partnerships to be a potential risk to the wellbeing of their children. Additionally, as argued by Cattell (2003), widowhood marks a permanent status of independence that is preferable to remarrying.

Ukuhlala was also key to bargaining for isidima in relation to themselves, and for their children. Vellem (2010) makes an important contribution to the understanding of human dignity from an African perspective, whereby dignity cannot be conceived of as an attribute that is peculiar to persons and their singularity, but rather as a relationship or a manifestation of human relations. Mntambo (2021: 114) draws from Vellem (2010) to explain that isithunzi, or isidima may be thought of as "something that is inherent to everyone but can sometimes be diminished or undermined". This was a sentiment shared by some of the participants, who felt that by virtue of having been widowed, siyehla isidima sakho [your dignity diminishes] as a human being. Tiyo Soga (1989: 176) reminds us of the popularized saying that came about through the diminished personhood and dignity of widows in society: "Umhlolokazi yinto ehlekwa nasithunzi sayo." [A widow is one that is ridiculed even by its own shadow.] Secondly, isidima can be thought of as being dependent on ubuntu bakho (how one interacts with people) (Mntambo, 2021). The argument made by Vellem (2010) and Mntambo (2021) is that isidima is negotiated through one's relations with others, and in our relations to our ancestors.

This provides key insight in the way that we can understand ukuhlala, and what this means for Xhosa widows. When the women negotiate for isidima they are ultimately bargaining for personhood, recognition, and belonging, for themselves and for their children. The importance placed on ancestral belonging amongst amaXhosa and what it means for one to be able to locate their site of belonging, is one which African women have personified. Isidima somntu (One's dignity) lies in one being able to relate not only to those who are living, but to our ancestral lineages. It is for this reason that as relayed in the previous chapter for example, when MamBhele's daughter was set to marry, MamBhele placed ixakatho (a small blanket or shawl) on her shoulders and went to inform her in-laws. She did this stating that "that situation does not concern me – my daughter is not mine, ngowa lapha, her identity lies at her paternal home." The point here is to understand that ukuhlala is also a mothering strategy used to secure and protect their children's wellbeing in nurturing the links created with the paternal ancestors at the homestead.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I unpacked the major themes presented in the previous chapter and sought to understand how these impact the ways in which widows come to conceive of their lives long after the period of mourning has ended. I argue that while it can be said that there is a changing nature of partnerships in South Africa, the presence of marriage and the tenuous dynamics thereof within a culture and rights discourse in democratic South Africa, provide a site to think about widowhood as a contestable identity that allows for a reimagining of African custom.

Through an exploration of ukuzila as a mourning practice, the dynamic nature of culture is also expressed due to the different ways of mourning, particularly evident through mourning dress. This section argued that the tenuous nature of widowhood presents itself in the attitudes surrounding mourning dress and ultimately creates hierarchies of mourning. Only one participant did not wear mourning dress due to religious reasons. The remaining participants that did not wear mourning dress, did so because of their tenuous positions as widows, who were either separated, divorced, or had cohabited with their partners long before they passed on. This section demonstrated the significance of the visibility and public nature of mourning dress, such that one is identifiable in their time of mourning, and the resultant expectations of behaviour and

demeanour. Parallels were drawn between the access to status and respectability as a married woman, gained through customary and/or civil marriage, and that of ascribing black mourning dress as the most appropriate mode of dress to demonstrate publicly, the respect and love one has for their late husband and his homestead. It was argued that the aesthetic of mourning then creates a hierarchy when the resultant attitudes are that those who wear amadakhi or forego mourning dress completely, are observed with the suspicion of not having undergone the custom adequately or not having loved their partners genuinely, when in fact the reasons for not wearing mourning dress vary from the very contestability of widowhood, to varying customary and religious beliefs amongst homesteads.

This chapter also argued that woman-centred networks are key factors in the ways in which Xhosa widows negotiate their feminist economic realities, and by extension, their everyday navigations of citizenship. Doing so necessitated an understanding of feminist economies, which rely on the use of woman-centred networks in imigalelo, burial societies, farming co-operatives, as well as notions of community-building demonstrated through church prayer groups, and the notion of ukuyovela. These networks are livelihood strategies used by women in order to survive, and fashion conceptions of joy and strength. It was shown that through these networks, women are able to participate as contributors to the market economy, while catering for their specific and contextual needs. The use of matrifocality was also useful in demonstrating the importance placed on the work of women in their economic production, and how this work was central to their conceptualisations of womanhood and motherhood practices. Ultimately, these woman-centred networks were also sites of labour which were performed to cope with the post-mourning period and reintegrate into society, but most importantly, to negotiate for their children's livelihoods.

Lastly, the ways in which women bargain for and maintain their dignity was engaged with using the concept of ukuhlala – remaining rooted. The women referred to this concept in relation to an avoidance of remarriage in favour of their independence, and protection of their children's wellbeing. I argue that while threads of ukubekezela [endurance] may be present in the process of engaging with one's marital homestead long after their partner has passed, this would not be an accurate reading of what ukuhlala means for the women interviewed. I argue further that when the women explicitly refer to "ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwana bam" in

post-mourning life, they are speaking to the rights of their children to make claims to their identity, to be able to point to where they belong, and have relationships with those that are able to ensure that certain rites of passage or necessary traditional ceremonies are performed. At the core of ukuhlala is the prerogative to protect and maintain what is in fact, a culmination of years of hard work and labour.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to understand Xhosa widows' navigations of citizenship after the mourning period of ukuzila. Specifically, the study aimed to examine what ruptures and continuities the time of widowhood brings in Xhosa women's navigations of citizenship. As a period marked by silences and seclusion, ukuzila marks a significant rupture in one's public and private life. Ukuzila marks a period in women's lives that is markedly different to the expectations that society has on men, marking mourning and grief work as unmistakably gendered. The thesis has demonstrated that this gendered experience of mourning is an extension of the gendered navigations of black women's experiences of their lives in democratic South Africa. This was shown particularly with the nature of marriage, and the gendered labour that is performed by new brides in their time of ukuhota, and the accompanied isihlonipho practices at their homesteads. The thesis has shown that much of how women make sense of their lives in the post-mourning period, is through motherhood and remaining rooted at their homesteads. The thesis also showed the tangible and intangible ways in which women create and nurture woman-centred networks as feminist economies for securing their livelihoods.

Through tracing the ways in which the discipline of Political Studies has positioned widowhood in literature, the study argued that much of where widows are positioned within the public imagination emanates from moments of spectacular violence in history. This was particularly the case in the South African context with the legacy of apartheid violence, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and the testimonies given at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and more recently, the Marikana Commission. Particularly in the case of the two commissions, the work of Ross (2003), Motsemme (2004), Russell (2008), and McEwan (2003) demonstrated the complexities of silences, finding voice, and being heard, and how the women who spoke at these commissions seldom made reference to their own roles in the liberation movement or to their own experiences of violence, but rather spoke of the abuses inflicted on their male relatives. This work demonstrated that it is women who ensure that the memories of their male relatives and husbands are captured in the public imagination. Without their grief work, many of the stories

that rendered the tragic and violent deaths of these men real and tangible, would not have been known.

These moments in our context demonstrated the gendered grief work that takes place, and the ways in which women become the public embodiments of memory, with little known about their own experiences and realities of violence and oppression. It therefore became imperative to situate this study within the nuanced experiences of how widowhood interrupts and informs women's everyday living.

Within the global context, the gendered nature of mourning was traced through an analysis of mourning dress and what this demonstrates regarding the publicness of mourning. Through culturally significant factors such as the meanings attached to marriage, the study found that customary marriage was particularly significant as a recognisable partnership in the African world sense, and this contributed to how one was able to demonstrate their mourning in the public sense. The significance of the black mourning dress was found to have implications for how widows are perceived in society. These created resultant hierarchies of mourning with stigmas attached to the kind of mourning dress one wears. South Africa finds itself in a context where the prevalence of marriage is decreasing due to a rise in cohabitation, the historical impacts of migration, and the economic implications of undertaking a marriage. This has had a lasting impact on understandings of partnerships for many. Through these tensions, it was found that claims to widowhood are not solely made along the lines of legal documents that prove the presence of a marriage and is contentious because of the tenuous nature of partnership in democratic South Africa.

Through an engagement with feminist citizenship theory posited by Healy-Clancy (2014), the nation-building rhetoric in heterosexual marital narratives was examined. While the idea of the nuclear family lay at the epicentre of the construction of the South African state, feminist citizenship scholarship allows us to understand that the notion of the nuclear family as nation building was in fact a false narrative to the context of South Africa. For African women, it was important to separate analytically the concept of citizenship from that of the nation-state, in order to be cognizant of the complexities that govern their lives (Yuval-Davis, 1999). Through an analysis of this, the study argued for a shift from the statist conceptions of citizenship, in favour of an understanding of citizenship as an important site for a politics of belonging. The study

revealed that there are numerous key sites in which widows trace their belonging and find sites of enacting their personhood once the period of mourning has ended. This study highlighted the themes of spirituality and prayer, woman-centred networks as modes of navigating feminist economic realities, as well as the notions of "ukuhlalela ilifa nesidima sabantwana".

Through an understanding of matrifocality in the ways in which economic production is intrinsically linked to one's identity as a mother and as a woman, the study found that widows make sense of their post-mourning life through ensuring that they negotiate for the livelihoods of their children. The study showed that Xhosa widows have a remarkable reliance on the church and the power of prayer to regain voice and sources of strength, both as modes of coping with widowhood and as ways in which to raise their children. The study shows that to be a widow who conducts herself with good behaviour, means being a woman and a mother who relies deeply on the power of prayer. Through the utilisation of networks created through the church, women in their families and communities, as well as connections made with those that were married or widowed in their cohort, the women demonstrated the importance of woman-centred networks in crafting sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families. The various modes of securing livelihoods, in both tangible and intangible ways, demonstrated the significant reliance on other women to cope with their economic realities, where social welfare is often not sufficient.

Importantly, the study explored the concept of ukuhlala, remaining rooted, as an important mode of negotiating for ilifa and isidima. Ukuhlala*,* in this context, was used as a departure from the notions of ukubekezela (endurance) that are commonly associated with a passive acceptance of any and all treatment in the relationships that women have with their partners and in-laws while they were alive. It was found that reading these notions solely through the lens of passivity and victimhood, negates the labour that the women remain in their homesteads to secure. Ukuhlala, therefore, was presented as a strategic mode of negotiating for what the women themselves have built through the years and ensuring that the investment of their labour was protected. Ukuhlala as a mode of bargaining for and protecting isidima of themselves and their children, was also examined in the reasons behind a disdain for remarriage as well as their mothering strategies of negotiating for their children's wellbeing at their paternal homes, and with their paternal ancestors.

The study shows that for Xhosa widows, everyday citizenship is understood through their roles as mothers. The ways in which they make sense of their livelihood strategies, are through protecting and maintaining first and foremost, the livelihoods and wellbeing of their children. This takes place through participation in woman-centred networks, a reliance on prayer as a source of strength, as well as remaining rooted at their marital homesteads as modes of bargaining for their own dignity and that of their children.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview questions- Xhosa widows

- Ideas of marriage

1. Please tell me about yourself. Where were you born and raised?

2. When you were growing up, what did you understand about marriage, in your family and community?

3. Did you always wish to be married?

4. When you were young, what did you learn about what makes a good wife?

5. How did you meet your late husband?

6. Was your marriage customary or traditional?

7. What values influence how you see yourself as a wife/mother?

- Experiences of mourning – Ukuzila

8. Did you undergo the period of ukuzila (seclusion)? If so, for how long?

9. Were you taught about the ways of being a widow and how to conduct oneself, in the same way that this is usually done during the process of ukuyalwa (instructions to a new bride) when one enters marriage? What does being umhlolokazi (a widow) mean to you?

10. Did you experience legal matters such as wills, inheritances, etc. in trying to gain access to resources?

11. In what ways did the process of ukuzila impact your daily life? E.g. your ability to work and provide for your family?

12. How did it affect your interactions and relations with others – participation in church activities, rituals, community events etc?

- Post-mourning

13. What was done to mark the end of the mourning period?

14. Was your family strict about isiko lenkcitha nzila (the tradition of releasing the widow from mourning)?

15. Although it is the family that releases the widow from mourning, were you able to influence the process of inkcitha nzila?

16. In the absence of 'the man of the family', how has decision making changed in your home life, with your children and in-laws, for example?

17. Has your role as the mother of the family (umama wekhaya) changed? – For example, do you feel that you now play a dual role (father and mother)?

18. Have the roles that you played in the activities of your community changed?

19. There are widow associations to support widows, do you know of them and do you think they are needed?

20. What other associations have been an important form of support to you – e.g stokvels?

21. In what ways have your relations with others changed, or stayed the same after the period of ukuzila had ended?

22. Are you re-married or have you considered re-marrying?

23. What have been the views of your family – e.g. Children and in-laws about remarrying?

24. If not, is there a kind of companionship that you hope for or have?

25. What advice would you give to a young widow about life as a widow?

Appendix B

Semi- structured in-depth interview questions- Widows Empowerment Programme (WEP)

- Background:

1. What is the Widows Empowerment Programme and when was it founded?

2. Why was the programme established, i.e. what factors motivated its establishment?

3. What are the aims, and visions of this programme?

- Nature of the programme:

4. What are the services and benefits that the programme offers to widows?

5. In what ways do you think that the services, benefits, or opportunities provided through the programme are important?

6. Would you say that the programme has a focus on supporting widows even long after the mourning period has ended?

7. What are the requirements of being a part of the programme, i.e. Does the programme target a specific demographic, in terms of widows' socio-economic positions and geographic location?

- How the personal impacts the work of the programme: (The personal is political)

8. How have cultural and communal perceptions and attitudes around death, mourning, and widowhood shaped the kind of work that you do?

9. Have you faced any backlash/criticism from communities, and possibly widows themselves, for doing the kind of work that you do?

10. What are some of the challenges that you have had as a programme when trying to support widows?

11. Moving forward, in what ways do you think the state and other stakeholders (i.e. NGOs, community and religious organisations etc.) could be providing meaningful support to bereaved widows?