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Research Dissertation

**Constructions of *Ukuyalwa* and Marriage satisfaction: experiences of Xhosa couples  
in the Eastern Cape**

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## Abstract

Marital satisfaction may be described as the extent to which one's expectations, desires and needs are being satisfied in their marriage. Studies that concern marital satisfaction provide us with crucial insights into factors that support or compromise the longevity of long-term, committed relationships. Little work has been done in understanding the role of cultural practices in marital satisfaction particularly in Africa, and South Africa more specifically. Ukuyalwa is a Xhosa ritual that takes place during a Xhosa traditional wedding, whereby the bride is introduced to the (traditional) guiding practices of her new home by the women of the family together with her sisters-in-law. This study informs the practice of African psychology as formulated by Ratele (2017b). Critical African psychology as a framework recognizes the construction of culture alongside political, socioeconomic, and historical matrices. These are acknowledged as an important element in psychological theories, methods, and explanations. This research project aimed to identify the discourses that circulate around ukuyalwa as a Xhosa cultural practice and consider the implications for the marital satisfaction of amaXhosa couples. The study interviewed 3 Xhosa couples of varying ages who had been married for different durations to develop an understanding of their experiences of ukuyalwa and marital satisfaction. Data was analyzed using a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) which allowed for the identifications of the discourses that the couples used to construct ukuyalwa and marital satisfaction. The couples discursively constructed marriage as 'divine unity', 'unification of families' and 'partnership'. Ukuyalwa was constructed as a 'gendered process', ideas of tradition and modernity, and a 'foundation' also became apparent. Satisfaction was constructed as 'open communication' and 'work'. The couples' positions shifted in their conversations, where in some instances they were 'learners', 'initiates', and/or 'passive', and in other instances, they were 'in charge', 'knowledgeable', and 'experts'. The discourses of culture, religion, and partnership circulated prominently in relation to marriage, ukuyalwa, and marital

satisfaction. The findings of the study speak to how the couples' constructions of marriage and cultural customs such as ukuyalwa are valuable as they often inform how couples behave in their marriage relationships and what they regard as satisfactory to them when it comes to marriage. These insights into what informs the couples' ideas on marriage and satisfaction can be utilised in informing couples therapy interventions.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented here is my own.

## **Chapter One: Introduction and Theory**

This chapter seeks to orientate the reader to the study. It is aimed at providing the background to the study. The chapter is divided into three sections. First an account of marriage in the African context is presented. I explore the concept of marriage, and positions amaXhosa take up and their ways of celebrating marriage. From this account I consider the richness and wisdom of traditional practices like ukuyalwa in terms of relationship satisfaction and give a rationale for the current study. Finally, this chapter orientates the reader to the theoretical framework underpinning the research study. This framework, which draws largely from Kopano Ratele's work, speaks to the lenses through which the researcher sifts through literature related to the study. It also influences how the research questions and methods are formulated, assists with planning for data gathering, analysis and interpretation of results – i.e., it influences my 'way of seeing' (Ratele, 2019).

### **Background to the study**

#### **1.1 Marriages in the African Context**

##### **1.1.1 The concept of marriage**

If one should visit the internet and search for the term marriage, they would be met with varying definitions. Authors such as Crapo (1996) posit that this is because defining marriage is difficult. What one individual may describe as what makes up marriage is very much dependent on the social group they form a part of and the beliefs the group draws on. This means there is no singular definition of marriage. Social phenomena or ideas exist because they are constructed by given and/or agreed upon meaning by society, they are socially mediated.

According to Girgis et al., (2011) marriage can be described as the unity of two individuals both by the heart and mind. These individuals are said to be committing to

romantically loving each other and caring for each other and includes the burdens and benefits of domestic life. Mbidi (1969) notes that "for African people, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all members of a given community meet: the departed, the living, and those yet unborn" (p. 133). From the latter perspective, the act of marriage may be experienced as extending far beyond the couple and their immediate families. Gyekye (1996), speaks of marriage as being an important link to the continuation of an African family tree. The couples or partners are positioned as obligated/encouraged to accept each other's family as their own. This is the reason why Olisa (2016), explains that in Xhosa culture when a lady receives a marriage proposal, they have the responsibility of informing their mother and family about the proposal and await consent. This measure has been put in place to avoid one going into a marriage relationship with someone they may be related to by clan. Here the concept of marriage is not considered a personal and private affair, but instead it is crucial for the families to be involved in the contracting of the marriage as this is believed to strengthen the marriage relationship. Not involving families is viewed as being immensely disrespectful.

Various types of marriages are recognized within the African context, namely: statutory marriage, civil marriage, Christian marriage, customary African marriage, and Islamic marriage (Gichinga 2005 as cited in Sodi et al., 2010). For purposes of this research project, we will focus on customary marriage, particularly as it pertains to AmaXhosa, the processes that take place during this form of marriage, and the connection it has with other forms of marriage.

From the above definitions one further notes the complexity of defining marriage. It is observed here that there exist varying spheres by which marriage can be defined, these including the social, cultural and legislative.

### **1.1.2 Customary African Marriage**

According to Mamashela (2004) Customary or African marriage is concerned with both individuals giving consent to getting married. It includes any marriage that takes place following practices, rituals, and customs that are traditionally observed by African people that form part of their culture. As we consider this definition, Letseli (2007) cautions us against the assumption that all African marriage processes are the same. Instead, the author asks that we think of African marriage as being more complex, meaning that there are varying African cultural beliefs. One group of Africans may differ from the next. One tribe within a group may also differ from another, and different families within a given tribe may have traditions and practices that are unique to how they go about conducting their marriage proceedings (Letseli, 2007). Indeed, as depicted here African marriage is socially mediated as it carries various meanings in various groups of Africans. This is in line with the social constructionist paradigm which understands the world as existing as it does due to the social influences and interactions (Galbin, 2014). What is common is the idea that African traditional marriages are not simply an agreement between the two individuals getting married but transcend beyond them and involve an agreement between two families, clans, and even tribes (Letseli, 2007).

### **1.1.3 AmaXhosa and traditional African Marriage**

AmaXhosa form part of the Nguni-speaking people and are the second largest group of the Bantu people of the Republic of South Africa (Bongela, 2001). They are said to comprise nine groups: the Xhosa Thembu, Mpondomise, Mpondo, Bomvana, Xesibe, Mfengu, Bhaca, and Ntlangwini. AmaXhosa are primarily located in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, although found in other locations also.

The process of a Xhosa marriage is fairly consistently described by authors such as Sigaba (2000), Somlata (2008) and Olisa (2017) as follows: In heterosexual relationships, the Xhosa traditional African marriage starts with a man proposing marriage to a woman of his choosing and upon acceptance of this proposal the man is then obligated to inform his family of his intentions to wed. The man's father or a male figure who is regarded as representing the head or father of the family will call a meeting of the family's men and inform them of the request. It is at this meeting that family representatives or messengers known as <sup>1</sup>**Onozakuzaku** (messengers) are chosen by the family men. These messengers are sent to the homestead of the bride-to-be to ask for her hand and negotiate the marriage of the two parties. Importantly, the bride-to-be needs to have also informed her own family that she has been seen by a man called **Isoka** (Fiancé/Partner) who has requested her hand in marriage. This is the initial stage of the Xhosa marriage as the representatives engage in **Lobola/Ikhazi** (bride-wealth) negotiations. When the two families have reached an agreement and lobola/ikhazi, the agreed upon monies are paid in full and the next stage begins (Majova, 2001).

Majova (2001) describes the next stage of the ceremonial process as follows: The bride's **uduli** (bridal party) accompanies her to the bridegroom's homestead where the actual marital proceedings will take place. The bride's **uduli** will depart in the morning and are said to arrive at the groom's home at sunset. Before getting there, they are required to stop at a visible distance near the groom's homestead. The groom's family then slaughters a goat as a way of bringing them down from where they stand to welcome them into their home. At the groom's home, a house is prepared for the bride's **uduli**. This house is known as **edulini** (bridal party house).

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<sup>1</sup> The English equivalents in the brackets are attempts to capture the intended meaning. These are only attempts to convey basic meaning.

On the day of the actual wedding celebration Majova (2001) explains that the bride and groom enter the kraal with their upper bodies unclothed and kneel on the old kraal manure. Here they are given words of wisdom for the chapter they are about to enter into as a married couple. This is done by elders of both families.

**Ukutyisa'masi** (drinking of sour milk) concludes the marriage ceremony during a Xhosa marriage celebration. This process takes place at the home of the groom. A goat is slaughtered, and the bride is given a piece of roasted meat to eat and a cup of **amasi** (sour milk) from the cows of her new home. The bride is confirmed this way and introduced to the family circle including the ancestors, so that she may be known as a new member of the family. Before returning home, the bride's party awaits the custom of giving the bride a new name which carries particular meaning for that family. It is at this stage that **ukuyalwa** (discipline) takes place.

#### **1.1.4 Ukuyalwa in marriage**

Discipline is a direct English translation of the word **ukuyalwa**. Discipline speaks to the teaching of rules and ways of behaving and obedience. Of course, 'discipline' does not capture the complexities of ukuyalwa and has punitive connotations in English. This study seeks to tease out this practice, and how it is constructed by amaXhosa. This will aid with definitional difficulties of capturing the practice. When it comes to amaXhosa, **ukuyalwa** forms part of various customs, including **Intonjane** (the rite of passage to womanhood), **Ulwaluko** (initiation), and **Umendo** (marriage). All the above-mentioned customs symbolise a new stage of life for those involved.

According to Geingca-Ndolo (2008), **intonjane** is derived from the word **ukuthomba** or **ukopha** (to bleed). This is to describe the process whereby a woman receives her first menstrual cycle. When this occurs, **intonjane** takes place and during this custom, the young woman is given words of wisdom by the elders, usually her aunts from her father's side of the family. She is advised of sexual and reproductive practices. It is explained that she has now entered into a developmental stage where she is able to conceive. She is advised of reproductive health practices and sexually transmitted infections. She is also taught that just because she has come of age, she cannot simply do as she pleases, but instead needs to continue respecting her elders.

Similarly, during the celebration of **ulwaluko** (initiation), when the **amakrwala** (new young man) are welcomed back into the homestead, **ukuyalwa** takes place. According to Bongela (2001) the young men are dressed in rugs and later new clothes, and it is at this point that they receive words of caution and wisdom on the meaning of manhood and how to carry themselves as men from the culturally espoused men of the community. The significance of **ukuyalwa** during **ulwaluko**, particularly where marriage is concerned, is that this is where the young men are also informed about the duties of a man in the household and how they are expected to conduct themselves as the man of the house (Bongela, 2001). As stated before, there are various meanings that can be drawn from particular social phenomenon that can be different in different social settings. Manhood and man of the house are deployed as conveying leadership rather than the patriarchal connotations allocated to them within some Eurocentric readings of cultural customs. Equally important to note is that the processes described here speak to heterosexual relations.

With respect to marital relationships Simelane-Kalumba (2014) defines **ukuyalwa** as a Xhosa ritual that takes place during a Xhosa traditional wedding, whereby the bride is taught about the laws and rules of her new home by the women of the family together with her sisters-in-law. This ritual forms part of the welcoming of the bride into her husband's homestead. The newly wedded woman is then given a new name, and she also changes into new traditional clothes (Mbunyuza-Memani, 2017). **Ukuyalwa** is a crucial part of the Xhosa traditional marriage ceremony as it plays an educative role in conveying knowledge about customs and traditions of the husband's homestead and expected codes of married life (Simelane-Kalumba, 2014). During this ritual, the bride is advised about the names of her new relatives, for her to **hlonipha** (respect) them. She also receives a new name from her sisters-in-law. Of course, traditional Xhosa marital ceremonies differ from family to family and tribe to tribe, influenced by urbanisation, globalisation and modernisation (Majova, 2001). This is because Xhosa traditions, much like any other culture, are not static. But the above description provides valuable context for the reader of a more typical traditional Xhosa marital ceremony and the role **ukuyalwa** plays within it.

Indeed, indigenous African marital practices speak to the respect and authority of elders and these including parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts, and the counsel they provide to married couples as being of paramount importance in teaching couples to deal with conflicts more effectively and thus reduce relationship distress (Nwoye 1991; Sodi et al, 2010). This thesis argues that traditional African marital ceremonies hold great wisdom and value in supporting the new couple through their relationship journey but remain an untapped resource in practices surrounding couples therapy. A better understanding of processes such as **ukuyalwa** hold the potential for contributing powerfully to improving our understanding of supporting couples therapeutically in the South African context.

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

This research project aims to identify the discursive constructions of **ukuyalwa** as a Xhosa cultural practice and consider the implications for the marital satisfaction of amaXhosa couples. The findings will in turn provide valuable insights about the role of this Xhosa custom in marital wellbeing, informing couples intervention work with Xhosa couples in the South African context, and add to already existing models and theories pertaining to couples counselling more broadly.

## **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

African cultural psychologists emphasize the need for African perspectives and voices in the development and implementation of psychological interventions (Ratele, 2018; Nwoye, 2010). These interventions include indigenous theories that focus on child development, human, spiritual and educational development. They also speak about marriage, family life, and intellectual functioning (Mkhize, 2021). The foundational influences for the emergence of African psychology have come about in response to hugely problematic research that has been disrespectful, misrepresentative and highly judgemental of the African person and their past and present culture (Nwoye, 2015). According to Nwoye (2015), African psychology, therefore, serves as a psychology that seeks to rehabilitate culture and the orientation of research in African universities.

Ratele (2017b) proposes a provisional heuristic in which one can understand and approach ideas regarding African Psychology. According to this heuristic, there is no singular African psychology, instead this work can be clustered into four broad categories of African psychologies which include i) psychology in Africa, ii) cultural African psychology, iii) critical African psychology, and iv) psychological African studies. These four psychologies are not

entire fields, instead, they are orientations or positions to Africa and psychology. They are separated by the way thoughts around Africa and psychology are understood (implicitly or explicitly) by various teachers, researchers, students, and therapists and, according to that understanding, how such individuals position themselves or identify with psychology and Africa (Ratele, 2017b).

### ***African Psychology as Psychology in Africa***

Ratele (2017b)'s first category, psychology in Africa, is one of the more prominent discourses circulating about psychology relating to our local South African context and forms the basis of most theoretical explanations of human behaviour. Researchers and practitioners are guided by its philosophies in the way they conduct research and therapy. This psychology is Eurocentric and assumes that all psychology is universal. Within this paradigm scholars may argue that prominent North American and Eurocentric forms of couple therapy interventions hold universal application and can be translated, adapted, and applied to local South African settings. One example of this is a study conducted by Lesch et al., (2018) exploring the implementation of EFT techniques in South African couples using the Hold Me Tight programme. But with the above understanding of African traditional marriage in mind, one asks the question then: are we not overlooking valuable wisdoms and coping mechanisms that could be employed powerfully in couple interventions in African contexts?

### ***Cultural African Psychology***

Ratele (2017b)'s second category, cultural African psychology refers to the ideas that authors such as Nwoye (2015) and Mkhize (2021) put forward when referring to what African Psychology is. This is work that relates to the study of personhood as it concerns itself with spirituality, cultural and metaphysical experiences. African psychology from this way of seeing

the world, considers elements such as shared African values, beliefs, viewpoints, and knowledge. Authors that write from this perspective are also interested in concepts such as colonial powers that have an effect on the cultural world of the native people (Ratele, 2017b). From within this paradigm, one may ask where is an African way of seeing and understanding the couple relationship, in couples therapy literature? African cultural psychologists emphasize the need for African perspectives and voices in the development and implementation of such interventions within the African context (Ratele, 2018).

### ***Psychological African studies***

Ratele (2017b)'s third category, psychological African studies, put Africa at the centre of academic work. This way of seeing the world is about the integration of psychoanalytical theories and tools and insights into research about Africa (Ratele, 2017b). These are studies whose object is Africa. This way of seeing can be useful as an approach as it can show how psychology can be useful as part of studies into Africa and its people, bringing African studies into psychology and psychology into African studies. Ratele (2017b) speaks of this way of seeing as being relatively new with little work currently done but puts forward authors such as Nsamenang (2007)'s work as laying the foundation for this kind of work.

### ***Critical African Psychology***

Ratele (2017b)'s final category, critical African psychology, concerns itself with the functions of power and knowledge and how 'power as knowledge' and 'knowledge as power' function concerning Africa and Africans, within psychology. Application of this approach to this study speaks to a critical African psychology orientation (Ratele, 2017a) that recognises couples as interlocked in matrices of culture, politics, history, and socioeconomics. These intersections are important in understanding psychological theories, methods, and

explanations. They help to focus on the psychopolitics of colonialism and its remnants (Hook, 2004), the imperatives to the decolonization of mainstream psychology, and contribute to postcolonial African society (Ratele, 2017b). Critical African psychology is a transdisciplinary orientation that seeks to reach beyond received psychology or psychology from North American, Canadian and Eurocentric contexts and move beyond to other disciplines, knowledge, and critical practices (Ratele, Malherbe, Suffla, Cornell & Taliep, 2021).

In this study, culture can be understood as "the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs, and technology which can be shared and transmitted from generation to generation" (Sibani, 2014, p. 107 cited in Sibani, 2018). Here culture is historical, a group's heritage and traditions; and **ukuyalwa** is a ritual that is a part of amaXhosa traditions that have been practiced by generations. As different scholars make varying constructions of culture and cultural traditions, as Ratele (2019) so powerfully highlights, this critical approach as a theoretical lens is crucial in understanding marital satisfaction. It gives room for us, as African researchers, scholars, and therapists to be able to define ourselves, our traditions, our culture, and its importance to us as Africans, whilst taking heed of productions of power. In so doing it potentially provides us with rich, culturally embedded resources to draw from in equipping couples to manage their relationships in more adaptive and less distressing ways.

Chitindingu and Mkhize (2016) speak of an Africentric paradigm and echo the placing of Africa and its people at the centre, as a point of departure, like scholars have done with other world narratives. According to Bulhan (2015 cited in Mkhize, 2021), not only has colonization led to the loss of land and the exploitation of Africa's resources and materials but it has also further been accompanied by memory loss in what is termed as an erosion of social bonding,

indigenous beliefs, values, identities, and knowledge. An African psychology is not the mere application of western schools of thought to a non-western society, rather it is grounded on indigenous philosophies, knowledge, and histories from the Nile valley civilizations and reaches to sources beyond the colonial era (Mkhize, 2021). Adjei (2019) posits that for us to speak of this critical African psychology it is important first that we attempt to understand the object of African psychology, which is the African person. There needs to be an understanding of how African persons think, their action potential, and morality. **Ukuyalwa** is an African custom that is practiced by Africans in Africa, and the underpinning framework must be situated in the existing realities in Africa - meaning in this instance, a Xhosa discursive description of **ukuyalwa**.

## Chapter Two: Context

This chapter orientates the reader to three important constructs that are central to this research project: i) relationship satisfaction, and ii) the Xhosa culture concerning marriage and iii) the custom of **ukuyalwa**. Where each of these constructs is concerned, I will review the available South African and international research as it relates to Kopano Ratele's (2017b) four (African) psychologies framework and identify important gaps in terms of what is currently known, as well as possible ways that this research study may contribute to these gaps.

### 2.1 Relationship satisfaction:

Relationship satisfaction is defined by Gerlach and colleagues (2018) as an individual's evaluation of their relationship, overall. This entails, for example, the degree to which their expectations are met in the relationship. Relationship satisfaction is understood to be the objective feelings that couples have about happiness, satisfaction, and joy they experience in their marriages or long-term relationships (Kharपुरi & Priya, 2019). A substantial amount of literature has been generated, this literature focused on relationship and marriage satisfaction within North American and Eurocentric contexts. Several authors point to various factors as working together to create relationship satisfaction in a couple. For example, Tavakol et al., (2017) conducted a review of literature that included 80 research papers pulled from electronic data bases such as PubMed, Science Direct, MEDLINE and google scholar to count a few, which spoke to factors that influence relationship satisfaction. These included age, level of education, and economic status. They found that with increasing age, came a decrease in relationship satisfaction and this may be understood in connection with the presence of children in a relationship. As couples have children and grow older, there is an increased demand and several responsibilities they have to fulfil. However, relationship satisfaction seemed to increase again for some couples when their children left the home, and the couple could focus

on each other again. The authors of the study reported that more educated couples appeared to experience more relationship satisfaction and better mental health. While low income or material hardship appeared to be a serious threat to the quality of the couple's marriage and its stability.

Kazim and Rafique (2021), concur and further posit that several researchers and theorists have presented various models to describe specific areas which need to function well for a relationship to thrive. These include factors such as personality, intimacy, interpersonal communication, expectation, autonomy, and romantic love to name but a few. Findings were based on a review summary of a body of literature that speaks to marital satisfaction in both collectivistic and individualist cultures. In terms of personality, findings of this review suggested that satisfaction in marital relationships is related with the personality characteristics of the day. Marital satisfaction is seen as a result of mixing up of different personality traits. Using the Big Five Personality traits, studies were able to identify traits that are important to marital satisfaction. These include high agreeableness, openness to experience along with extroversion and conscientiousness and low neuroticism. In terms of intimacy, feelings of belongingness and love appeared to be predictors of marital satisfaction. Autonomy is the idea of each of the spouses having the ability to make their own decisions and being in charge of their own lives. For marital satisfaction to occur there has to be a balance of both intimacy and autonomy. Interpersonal communication, that is the ability of the dyad to effectively encode and decode non-verbal and verbal cues of communication was also a predictor of marital satisfaction. The dyad's ideas on the role each individual plays as a partner and in the family, these being both contemporary and traditional roles were found to enhance satisfaction within the marriage. Lastly romantic love was also identified as a predictor of marital satisfaction. The authors speak of the idea that in the western world there appears to be a common attitude that

romantic love does not exist in collectivistic cultures. This being untrue as the studies show that how couples think about love, is something that may be demonstrated differently by different people.

On the African continent, research about relationship satisfaction has focused largely on couples in South Africa, but studies remain fairly limited. Erhabor and Ndlovu (2013) measured relationship satisfaction across four psychological variables namely: gender, communication, emotional competence, and psychological well-being in a sample of 500 married men and women with an average of 37 years of age residing in Johannesburg in the Gauteng province. Their study found that South African women reported more marital satisfaction when they experienced consensus in their relationships. The consensus here refers to an agreement on matters of importance in the relationship and expressing their emotions in a way that was validated and accepted by their partners. While South African men felt less inclined to verbally express their emotions but rather more satisfied in the relationship when they experienced personal psychological well-being, and this was reinforced by a sense of mastery of the environment around them. The findings of this South African study seem to speak to the US and European findings with regards to factors that promote marital satisfaction such as met expectations and communication. How these are expressed, experienced, and executed may be what is specific to the South African findings. Consider the women in this study were found to draw satisfaction from not only met personal needs for validation but from both party's met needs and a need for acceptance from their partners. For the men, satisfaction was said to be derived from mastery of environment. The positions assigned to both women and men as found in the study speaks to issues of gender inequality and patriarchy. Here the women are considered as deriving their satisfaction from caregiving, putting the needs of others before their own. On the other end men are reported as deriving satisfaction from mastering

their environment, this speaking to their concern with providing and conquering their environment. This view being a problematic one as it further reinforces ideas of a women's place only being a caregiver and men being the ones to fulfil their potential.

Clark and Brauner-Otto (2015) conducted a study on divorce in sub-Saharan Africa with the intention of improving research on the topic of divorce conducted in Africa. The authors hoped to establish a better understanding of family dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa and as divorce has been commonly positioned as a major contributing factor to instability in this region. Their study revealed that divorce is not increasing in the sub-Saharan Africa in the way that media and some research studies lead us to believe. Important to the current study, the authors speak to how little research into understanding divorce in sub-Saharan Africa exist. They further shed light into how divorce may be interpreted in various ways by different populations of the sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, they posit of the little that does exist, the claims are from dated ethnographic work in small populations. Socio-political factors were found to be play a contributing role in the divorce rates, as many families had been separated by wars taking place in their countries (Clark & Brauner, 2015).

Conroy and colleagues (2016) looked at the association between relationship quality and HIV status. This study was focused on outcomes for health particularly HIV when it came to satisfaction within a relationship. The authors were interested in understanding the dynamic between power quality in romantic relationships, health, and risky behaviours. Their study was conducted through the use of surveys with 448 heterosexual couples living in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Conroy and colleagues (2016) posit that research on health interventions aimed at improving HIV-related risk behaviour should consider sources of shared power (Conroy et al., 2016). The study found that shared power is associated with higher relationship quality. These

findings seem to be consistent with international literature that speak to the ideas of the dyad experiencing satisfaction when they each experience their needs and expectations being met in the relationship.

Hilpert et al., (2016) paper examined the cultural influence in dyadic coping processes this was based on 7973 married individuals across 35 nations. The authors posit that little is known about how culture has an effect on a couples' coping behaviors. They looked at four cultural constructs namely: individualism/collectivism, family situation (nuclear/extended), gender roles, and communication that are said to have an effect on couple's coping behavior (Falconier et al., 2016 cited in Hilpert et al., 2016). The authors made various hypothesis or proposals prior to the results of the studies from the various nations based on the four constructs. They posited that whenever partners who identify with a collectivistic culture experience stress, they might give less explicit support and the provided support might be less effective than those from partners who identify with the more individualistic cultures. The coping ways of couples that are a part of extended families were perceived as possibly being very different from those of nuclear families as their family network is larger and more people could provide support. Where gender roles are concerned, societies where men and women share equal and unbiased gender roles, the coping process can be congruent as both men and women can equally seek and provide support to maintain their relationship (Bodenmann, 2005). Societies where there may be an imbalance of power between men and women, the process would be more one-sided. Lastly, couples from individualistic cultures are assumed to be more explicit on their communication compared to those from collectivist cultures which may be more indirect. The findings of this paper illustrated that culture does have an impact on how couples cope with distress and ultimately affecting the couple's satisfaction. Equally important is that the findings illustrated that there is no one correct or assumed to be correct

way of coping with stress as a dyad. For example, the assumed ideas that couples who identified with the collectivist culture would be less able to help each other cope with stress or those in extended families had more support which meant they would cope better were found to be not true. What was deemed important is the couple's coping behaviours in whatever culture they identified with. What the authors noted at the end of the study is there are existing couple interventions that aid couples in troubled relationships (Halford et al., 2010) their effectiveness across cultures has yet to be determined. It is crucial to examine whether a skill, such as dyadic coping which has shown to have cross-cultural benefits can be taught to all couples.

Consider this study by Lesch et al., (2018) which focused on the application of Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT) in the South African context. The study comprised of 10 couples who participated in a psychoeducation program called Hold Me Tight (HMT) grounded in the theory and principles of EFT. The study found that EFT was effective and useful with the couples that formed part of the study. For the study in hand what is important about the study that Lesch and colleagues (2018) conducted is, though the intervention proved successful, the authors highlighted a number of challenges to be mindful of when implementing and facilitating such a programme. One key observation here was the different constructions of emotions that were prevalent in specific contexts. They found that emotional expression was regulated by culture, religion, and gender in different contexts, in that particular emotions were seen to be acceptable and desirable in specific contexts. This observation is important as I previously noted in various studies that using a blanket conclusion in what may be deemed as appropriate display of feelings and emotions may prove detrimental. It also highlights that for various couples of different cultures not all already existing interventions may work or prove useful in couple therapy.

As I sift through this available literature on relationship satisfaction and consider it through the heuristic lens proposed by Ratele (2017b) important themes begin to emerge. First, I recognise how little research has been done in terms of marital satisfaction in our context, particularly where African or cultural marriage is concerned. Secondly, of the little work that has been written both internationally and locally, many of the factors that are perceived as predicting marital satisfaction are interpreted using the Eurocentric measures of what may be perceived as relationship satisfaction. This evident more specially in the studies that compare so called individualistic and collectivist societies, an example of this being in the Kazim and Rafique (2021) study where a misconception about romantic love not existing in collectivist societies is mentioned. Consider how the available South African studies fit with what Ratele (2017b) refers to as psychology in Africa. Although these studies have been conducted in the South African context, they draw largely on theories, tools, and ways of seeing and conducting research and psychotherapy that have been developed in North America, Canada and Europe. What Ratele (2017b) might posit is that for these studies to become Africa(n)-centred requires far more than the adaptation and application of psychological theories to Africa. Instead, such research would involve developing new approaches to understanding relationship satisfaction, and research studies informed by existing conditions and practices of Africans living in Africa.

An example of this would be Nganase and Basson's (2019) study that sought to examine the dynamic between Black<sup>2</sup> mothers and their daughters-in-law. The study comprised 20 mothers-in-law and 20 daughters-in-law who had been in a mother-daughter-in-law relationship for at least 6 months, residing in Pretoria. Among other factors, the study found that all the participants agreed on the importance of a good mother-daughter-in-law relationship, as this meant that the triad relationship between the mother-daughter-in-law and husband would

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<sup>2</sup> A race classification used under apartheid, referring to people of African Ancestry.

operate smoothly, therefore, promoting satisfaction within the partner relationship. In their work these authors allowed for both daughter-in laws and mother in-laws to narrate their experiences and give meaning to these experiences they each reported. The authors placed the participants at the centre of the study and positioned them as experts of their own lived experiences. This is seen through the use of theories such as family systems theory and a research design that was phenomenological in nature which allow for participants to give meaning or story their own experiences. By doing so participants were able to speak to contextually specific factors like the importance of transgenerational familiar relationships in maintaining relationship satisfaction within the couple. This finding makes sense in terms of the strong focus in many African cultures on the importance on transgenerational family unity and identifies this focus as a potentially important resource in improving relationship satisfaction in African couples. It is also important to note that culture may at times be utilized by others as a tool to oppress on others. In Ratele's (2017b) four psychologies, he makes this point as he discusses cultural African psychology to which he critiques for its view of Africa as exceptional. He speaks to ideas that sometimes this can lead to the assumption that every member of a cultural group bares the need to ascribe to it.

## **2.2 Marriage relationships and Ukuyalwa kwaXhosa**

There remains a paucity of available literature on marriage relationship and the traditional process of **ukuyalwa kwaXhosa**. Ramphele (2002) provides an example of work that strongly affirms Xhosa cultural practices. Ramphele (2002) examined Xhosa practices and the power of the ancestors. The author's work gives valuable insights into Xhosa culture and makes mention of certain rituals and customs as being of importance to amaXhosa. One such ritual is **Imbeleko** (introduction of a child to its ancestors) which is said to strengthen cultural identity and the transmission of cultural wisdom and knowledge between generations. They further explains that culture is not something that can be taken off like a cloak, but rather that

people are embedded in their culture, their connection to their ancestors, and the practice of their traditions. From this position, the concept of marriage kwaXhosa and **ukuyalwa** is situated in cultural African psychology that views **ukuyalwa** as being experienced as a crucial and meaningful rite of passage that not only links the bride to her new family but also introduces her to the ancestors of the family so that they may recognise and accept her. This rite of passage links one Xhosa generation to the next and unifies families (Nkosi & Daniels, 2007).

The value of Ramphele's (2002) work is that it provides insights into the importance of such customs to African people. In so doing it also provides rich resources that could potentially be drawn upon to better understand how relationship satisfaction is established and maintained through deeply culturally meaningful practices. This work is an example of Ratele's (2019) African cultural psychology and highlights the need for more scholarly work that speaks to an African way of seeing and existing.

Nwoye (2006), introduced what he terms as role theory hypothesis. This hypothesis understands the couple's conflict using an indigenous African model. According to role theory, couples are viewed as occupying particular social positions which come with particular obligations and privileges within the marriage relationship. Many of these are deeply culturally embedded and defined. Harmony or secure attachment within the marriage, according to this theory, comes from each partner's ability to fulfil the expectations of the social position they occupy within the marriage. Marital disharmony is seen as stemming from an inability of one or both partners to live up to the set standard of the marital role that is expected of their position in the household (Nwoye, 2006). It is of importance that research positions its participants at the centre of its work. Consider how current research often uses psychometric measures

developed in the global north to measure the satisfaction of couples in the global south. This often fitting the couples into a particular box of what may or may not be considered as satisfactory in relationships.

More research focused on exploring these social positions, which are culturally determined and maintained, and the ways in which they could be harnessed to improve relationship satisfaction for the couple, could be a powerful and novel new direction for thinking about couple therapy and support for African couples in distress.

In contrast to Rampele's (2002) and Nwoye's (2006) work which I argue is an example of an African cultural psychology position, that affirms African identities and values, Pretorius and colleagues (2014) present an example of what is typically, currently available in the South African literature – a psychology in Africa. They conducted a study of seven Black South African women, ranging in age from 38-47 years, reporting to be in abusive relationships. The participants were mostly Sotho women. The study found that economic factors played an active role in the way that the participants related to and responded to their experiences of abuse, as did particular socio-cultural factors. The authors concluded that patriarchal values, stemming from participants' cultural beliefs and practices, were responsible for the abusive behaviour experiences by these participants in their relationships. One of the cultural expectations highlighted in the research was that a woman should endure all hardship in their marriage, including abuse (Pretorius et al., 2014). I would argue that the conclusions drawn from this article pathologise and stigmatize African cultural practices without demonstrating a considered understanding of such practices and in so doing shut down explorations into the rich value of cultural practices in improving and maintaining relationship satisfaction for many African couples. The conclusions of this study do speak however highlight how particular parts

of some cultural practices can reinforce ideas of gender inequality in the marriage, this ending up having a variety of consequences on the marriage.

Studies concerning relationship satisfaction provide us with crucial insights into factors that improve or diminish long-term, committed relationships. However, currently, less work has been done in understanding the role of cultural traditions and practices in relationship satisfaction particularly in the South African context. Herich et al (2010), speak to how forms of committed relationships, including formal and arranged marriages between men and women, are present in almost every culture and yet similar to other psychological constructs, marital satisfaction, and its constructs have mainly been researched in North American, Canadian, and European relationships. Halford et al., (2018 cited in Bretana et al., 2019) agree with the above points and call for more cross-cultural studies that compare experiences of relationships in different countries in order to assess the impact of different norms and cultural values on relationships. Berscheid (1995) explains that these studies are important because couple relationships are guided by norms, customs, and expectations that are a result of culture. Considering these important gaps in the current research available on relationship satisfaction in African couples' relationships, the focus of this research study was to explore Xhosa couples' constructions of ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction

## Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Having motivated for why culturally informed understandings of relationship satisfaction are so important, particularly in the African context, this chapter presents the research aim and questions of this study. It outlines the data collection process including where and when semi-structured interviews took place. The chapter includes an introduction to social constructionism and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) as lenses for analyzing the data collected. This approach to data analysis allowed for the identification of discourses that the couples I interviewed drew from to construct **ukuyalwa** and marital satisfaction. Ethical issues are considered towards the end of the chapter as they guided the entire research process.

### 3.1 Research aims

The overall aim of this study was to explore Xhosa couples' constructions of ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction. The study sought to discover:

- How do these Xhosa couples construct ukuyalwa and marriage?
- What discourses do these couples draw on to construct ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction?
- What implications does this reading of these constructs have in terms of relationship satisfaction?

### 3.2 Paradigm and research approach

A qualitative research approach was used in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the social phenomena of **ukuyalwa** and relationship satisfaction within the context of Xhosa marriage (De vos et al.,2005), drawing from a social constructionist paradigm. According to Willig (2013, p.49), "social constructionism as a paradigm is concerned with the identification of different ways that social reality is constructed that are available in a culture, to explore the

conditions of their use and to trace their consequences for human experience and social practice”. Social constructionism is of the notion that human beings exist as a result of social and interpersonal influences. Burr (2015) further maintains that what we call social constructionism problematizes our current understanding of the concept of knowledge pertaining to the nature of the world. It challenges the idea that the world is derived from unbiased, objective observations of events. It notes that there is learning that occurs as a result of our interactions in a group or society. This learning is connected to how we construct our realities, and the world around us (Galbin, 2014). Our understanding of the world therefore results from a historical process of interaction and negotiation among groups of people.

This approach is particularly appropriate for the research question because it speaks to the idea that couples and their ideas of marriage and satisfaction do not exist in isolation but are rather nested in their societies and these hold meaning and influence the couple’s marriage and what they consider as satisfaction. This approach also aligns well with Ratele’s (2017b) critical African psychology position where the intention is to consider that a person does not exist in isolation but is influenced by the culture, history, and politics of the society in which one is a part of. These are seen as being an important consideration in any psychological intervention that seeks to understand those individuals. In this study, couples therapy as psychological intervention is asked to consider the couples African-centredness as a position from which to start in their work with African couples.

Some of the features of social constructionism include taking a critical stance on those assumptions about the social world that are taken for granted which can be viewed as advancing the interest of dominant social groups (Galbin, 2014). Burr and Dick (2017), mention further that social constructionism is interested in the role that language, culture and historical

specificity play in knowledge production as well as power relations, which are of relevance to the present study. Language is described as providing a way in which individuals perceive and make sense of the world. Gergen (2014) posits that language is a way of relating, entrenched within broader forms of life - humans socially construct reality by their use of agreed means of communication through language. This study is particularly interested in how Xhosa couples use language and narratives to provide a deeper understanding of **ukuyalwa** and relationship satisfaction.

Cultural and historical specificity speaks to how the world is classified and categorized and how that varies culturally and historically (Burr & Dick, 2017). Discourse and disciplinary power speak to a set of ideas that are culturally significant or broad meaning systems, that can be utilized to make sense of the world (Burr & Dick, 2017). These discourses influence what we do and how we act (Knights & Morgan, 1991). They also influence how research designs are conceptualised and implemented to perpetuate particular ways of thinking about constructs like relationship satisfaction and cultural practices.

Disciplinary power speaks to people's wish to conform to these societal norms. Power relations speak to how the positions that people occupy in society including class and occupation, allow some groups to have more power and authority than others. These exist both at a societal and individual level (Burr & Dick, 2017). This research study purposefully tries to disrupt these power relations by introducing new voices to the discussion about relationship satisfaction, that are culturally embedded in South Africa, and the Xhosa traditional marriage process. The issue of gender is one that has been riddled by a long history of favouring men over women not just at household level but on various levels of society as well. Cultural and traditional practices have also a big role in reinforcing the ideas of one gender having more

power and authority over the other. The study continuously troubles instances where gender inequality and patriarchy are reinforced by the traditional practice of ukuyalwa.

In accordance with a social constructionist view, I have analysed my data utilizing a Foucauldian lens, as I sought to identify the discursive constructions of **ukuyalwa** and relationship satisfaction during my interviews with the Xhosa couples. Discourse shapes subjectivity and experience (Foucault, 1972). It further provides various ways of speaking about particular issues. Discourse is therefore never made up of a single statement or source but rather appears in a variety of texts or statements and forms of conduct at several sites within society. For example, in Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, he argues that a new discourse of sexuality has changed how we think about pleasure, desire and our inner selves (Foucault, 1972). Similarly, it may be argued that prominent discourses in couples therapy intervention shape how we think of marriage satisfaction and cultural practices surrounding the marriage relationship; further, that these are not situated within an African-centered way of seeing and doing.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) considers the role of power and can provide those without a voice the opportunity to be heard as legitimate speakers (Khan & MacEachen, 2021). This approach is applied to interview talk and what it reveals about the construction of psychological and social life. Here, discourse can be understood as facilitating, restricting, and enabling what can be spoken by whom, where, and when (Parker, 1992 cited in Willig, 2008). Discourse offers what Foucault (1972) refers to as subject positions which when occupied, have implications for subjectivity and experience. The availability of discourses in a given culture is a focal point in FDA. It asks questions about the relationship between discourse and

how individuals think and feel (subjectivity), what they practice, and the conditions with which such practices may take place (Willig, 2008).

### **3.3 Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to identify willing participants because I sought to identify and select individuals who were knowledgeable about **ukuyalwa** (Palinkas et al, 2015). The study explored the constructions made by Xhosa couples of varying ages who have been married for different durations to explore potentially varying constructions of **ukuyalwa** and relationship satisfaction. The variance in the couple's ages and duration of marriage is hoped to provide a richness of information from couples who have experienced ukuyalwa at various periods in time. Consider how practices such as ukuyalwa are passed down through generations that evolve over time. By hearing from couples of varying ages we could perhaps gain an account that is rich and varied. The variation in duration of marriage may also provide us with varied accounts of what couples experience as satisfaction in their marriage. The researcher advertised the research by use of an advertisement on social media. The researcher's email and contact details were on the study advert. Various individuals shared the advertisement on their social media platforms. Various couples reached out to indicate interest. Couples were selected on condition that they meet the criteria for inclusion, they were contacted via their cell phone and email details. The study was made up of three Xhosa couples residing in the Eastern Cape. Couple demographics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: **Participants Demographics**

<b>Couple</b>	<b>Language during interview</b>	<b>Years married</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Children</b>
1	IsiXhosa and English	15	*H 46 **W 40	3
2	IsiXhosa and English	7	H 34 W 33	2
3	IsiXhosa and English	1	H 35 W 29	6-7 Months Pregnant

Description: \*H: Husband and \*\*W: Wife.

### 3.4 Procedures for Data Collection

Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews which were conducted by the researcher (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). These were conducted in isiXhosa, accompanied by a semi-structured interview guide (see appendix A). The guide included several key questions intended to elicit constructions of **ukuyalwa** and relationship satisfaction and provided descriptions of the couples' experiences of **ukuyalwa** in the different aspects of their relationships (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The semi-structured nature of the interview provided the opportunity for the conversation to expand on points of discussion beyond those asked by the questions in the guide. The interviews took place between January- April of 2022 and were conducted online using zoom video sessions. Online interviews proved useful, with more and more people moving to virtual meetings since Covid 19 began, this meant that I could be able to reach more couples all over the Eastern Cape without them having to leave the comfort of their own surroundings. With work and other life commitments arranging a time for the interview was easier as the couples could pick a time during the day that would work for both of them. Without worrying about the logistics of movement. The difficulty with the online interviews had to do with connectivity and at times , internet data difficulties on the side of the couples. Any therapist could tell you about the difficulty of reading body language via

zoom video sessions, this was also something I experienced during my interviews with the couples. Body language is an important part of any interview or session as it forms part of communicating feelings and intentions.

The interviews were audio and video recorded. The audio recordings were later translated and transcribed into English for analysis by an IsiXhosa home language speaking transcriber at the department of psychology at Rhodes University (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

### **3.5 Data analysis: Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

Consistent with a critical African psychology orientation, data was analysed using a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). I will briefly outline the key concepts of a Foucauldian lens, a Foucauldian conception of discourse, the power-knowledge nexus, and Technologies of the Self. It is important that these are explained as they are the foundation to which my analysis is built. Thereafter I explain how one would go about implementing a FDA.

#### **3.5.1. Foucauldian Lens**

Rouse (1994) posited that Foucault had long written about knowledge in the human sciences before he ever wrote about power. His writings depicted an interest in the epidemic contexts in which particular forms of knowledge became intelligible and authoritative. Foucault was of the argument that certain investigations were shaped depending on statements and concepts that were deemed intelligible together. The seriousness and legitimacy of these statements was also dependent on who was authorized to speak seriously and with credibility (Rouse, 1994). His work *Archaeology of Knowledge* refers to these historical fields of knowledge as discursive formations. For Foucault it is through discourse, through knowledge, that we are formed. The power of this knowledge then follows from our acceptance of reality

with which we are offered (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2012). The creation of discourse falls on those who possess the power to communicate (Foucault, 1972). Foucault argued that all social relations are relations of power, these being family or the hierarchies in governance and other social institutions (Mambrol, 2016). He underscored the discursive basis of power, institutions, and social relations by illustrating how ‘so-called’ objective disciplines like that of science relied upon particular assumptions about an object to be investigated with the use of particular language to talk about these objects ultimately constructing an institution or knowledge around it. This speaks then to Foucault thought around the power-knowledge nexus, and how the phrase power-knowledge does not mean knowledge is power but rather a relation that illustrates how certain knowledge is suppressed power. Power produces and suppresses knowledge (Mambrol (2016). This is an important premise to work from in this current study because I have illustrated how silenced the voices of African couples have been in the literature to date, about how we understand relationship satisfaction and how psychology can draw from African, culturally embedded wisdoms to better intervene to support and improve relationship satisfaction.

### **3.5.2. Foucauldian Conception of Discourse**

Foucault’s conception is that discourse is the embodiment of the power/knowledge nexus, it is a site of power relations, it is a way of systemically constituting the subjects and objects of which we speak (Hall, 2001). It is embedded in institutional practices, culture etc., that provide the language to talk about and represent knowledge on a particular topic in a particular part of history (Hall, 2001). It is for this reason that this study focuses on the discourse couples deploy in speaking about the constructs of ukuyalwa, marriage and marital satisfaction.

### 3.5.3. Power-Knowledge Nexus

According to Hall (2001), Foucault studied discourse as a system of representation. Foucault posited that not only is knowledge a form of power, but power is also implicated in the quest of establishing in what situations or occurrences knowledge is to be applied or not. When knowledge is deployed in the real world it carries real-life effects and, in that sense, becomes the truth. This means that this same knowledge carries the ability to be utilised to enforce and regulate the actions of others. Thus, there can be no power relations without knowledge (Foucault, 1977 cited in Hall, 2001). This has important implications in the practice of couples therapy interventions. What we consider 'knowledge' regarding marriage relationships and marital satisfaction, for example, has implications for intervention approaches, formulations, and 'treatment'. The conception of the power-knowledge nexus then prompts qualitative researchers to look for absence, difference, and local contexts rather than similarity, presence, and universal contexts (Khan & MacEachen, 2021).

From a Foucauldian view, power is regarded as being circular. This means that it is not held by one particular group or imposed by others, but rather it has multiple sources and is relational (Willig, 2008). However, Foucault does consider how power-dominant discourses privilege particular versions of social reality that are seen as legitimate and universal (Willig, 2008). Foucault asks us to move away from thinking of power as uni-directional but to consider power as circular, as something that is not imposed on others or moving in a top-bottom direction. It is applied or exercised through a net-like organization (Hall, 2001). This means that we all to some degree are caught up in its circulation, and we can occupy the oppressor and oppressed position. Power, therefore, is to be thought of not only as being all bad or as something that is meant to restrict or control us. Power has the ability to create and produce

things and experiences that bring us pleasure, knowledge, and discourses that we can draw on (Foucault, 1980, cited in Hall, 2001).

The notion of subjectivity or subject positions in FDA speaks to subjects as being the carrier of the kind of knowledge that discourse produces. Here, a subject can become a vessel for power. It therefore cannot stand alone outside of power/knowledge as its source. Discourse creates subjects - figures who humanize particular forms of knowledge that the discourse creates. It is through discourse that subject positions are constructed and here they have meaning. A subject position offers a location, a version of reality as well as a moral location within spoken interaction (Arribas- Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017). I am particularly interested in the subject positions of the Xhosa couples in this project and how these positions offer a particular version of reality that informs how cultural practices like ukuyalwa relate to relationship satisfaction.

#### **3.5.4. Technologies Of Self**

In *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault described his work as a critical enquiry into how humans develop knowledge about themselves. He proposes that instead of taking the concept of knowledge at face value, it should be regarded as specific truth games of understanding the self (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017). Here technologies speak to the interactions between the self and others and the manner in which power is exerted over oneself (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017). *Technologies of Self* speak to people's various operations of the mind, body, soul, conduct and way of being. "These are said to be operations that individuals make all on their own or with the help of others, in order to transform themselves to reach a state of happiness, wisdom, purity or perfection" (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18). Foucault perceived individuals as being able to self-determine and have a sense of agency. He saw people as

possessing the ability to challenge and resist structures that dominate in the modern society (McMay, 1992).

### **3.6. Implementing the FDA**

According to Willig (2008), “the stages [of a FDA] allow the researcher to map some of the discursive resources used in a text and the subject positions they contain and to explore their implications for subjectivity and practice” (p. 115). This was done in this project by using transcribed data from interviews with three Xhosa couples. The stages of a FDA suggested by Willig (2008) were used to guide analysis as follows:

Stage one of the analysis involved a grounded reading and examining of the data for the prominent discursive constructions of 'ukuyalwa', 'marriage', and 'relationship satisfaction'. Stage two focused on situating these constructions within wider discourses and noting which discourses were drawn upon to make meaning of the discursive objects of enquiry. Stage three was concerned with action orientation: the discursive context in which different discourses were deployed, and what was achieved by these constructions. Stage four encompassed identifying the subject positions which were made available for Xhosa couples. These refer to the locations from which subjects acted and had direct implications for subjectivity. Stage five focused on the relationship between discourse and practice, considering how the objects and subject positions contained in the interviews opened up or closed opportunities for relationship satisfaction.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

As the researcher, I undertook to abide by the necessary ethical procedures for conducting research. The research project received ethical clearance from the Department of Psychology's

Research Proposal Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) and the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Some of the ethical considerations that were important for this research are described in more detail below.

### **3.7.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation**

Informed consent speaks to the individual knowingly giving consent to participate as an exercise of their choice, this being free of any manipulation, deceit, or fraud (Lune & Berg, 2017). A consent statement was presented to each participant, outlining the potential risks and benefits and nature of the study (see appendix B). Consent for audio and video tapping of the interview was also requested of the couple and they were informed that participating in the study was voluntary and that refusing to participate was within their rights (see appendix C). This was done via email correspondence with the couple and was revisited during the introduction on the interview day. The couples could withdraw from the study at any point, even after signing the informed consent. The couples were also provided with an information sheet that they could read to gain further information about the study (Appendix D). They were given time to read through the informed consent and information sheet documents, address any concerns and sign when they had been satisfied with the information (Arifin, 2018). These documents were available in both isiXhosa and English for the couples to read through and understand in both or their preferred language.

### **3.7.2 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality refers to the attempt to remove any elements from the study that might be utilized to identify the participants (De vos et al., 2005)). Confidentiality means that only the researcher and a select few individuals (members of their team) may have access to the participant's identities and information. The select few also have to agree to maintain

confidentiality (De vos et al.,2005). In this particular study only the researcher and transcriber and research supervisors had access to this data.

Anonymity refers to a form of confidentiality, it keeps the identities of the research participants secret . This research ensured anonymity through the use of pseudonyms in the place of the couples real names (Saunders et al., 2015). All identifying data was removed from the transcripts which were then stored online, and password protected for a period of 5 years and then will be destroyed in compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).

### **3.7.3 Cultural and linguistic Barriers**

The researcher needs to be aware and cautious of any barriers to research. Language is an important part of the research process (Arifin, 2018). I as the researcher targeted isiXhosa-speaking couples and therefore isiXhosa was the selected language used throughout the research process to allow for the couples to be able to communicate in their home language. I, as the researcher am an isiXhosa home language speaker, which proved invaluable during the interview process. I have outlined a few examples of why I considered this so valuable.

During the interviews with the couples, one of the male participant had been sharing and reflected on their experience of **ukuyalwa** and how it had begun at initiation school. As a researcher who is isiXhosa speaking and understands the sacred meaning of this Xhosa rite of passage, it was important for me to respect his decision not to divulge certain information during his explanation of his learning, thus indicating respect for his culture. Provisions were made for multilingualism and to actively promote deep understanding between me as the researcher and the couples. These included the couples being encouraged to code switch between isiXhosa and English during the interview, wherever necessary; and all research

related materials - the informed consent form; the information sheet and interview guide being available in isiXhosa and English.

#### **3.7.4 Avoidance of harm**

It is important to understand that participants can potentially be harmed in a physical and/or emotional manner when engaging in research processes (De vos et al., 2005). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect their participants against harm. This protection needs to move beyond just making efforts to repair in the case of harm, to actively minimize harm (De vos et al., 2005). It is important to thoroughly inform the participants about the potential risks of partaking in the study. In this research study, the information sheet and informed consent documents thoroughly explained any potential risk that the couples may be exposed to by partaking in the study. These included the risk that talking about their marriage relationship could bring up unexpected feelings and reactions within the marriage towards their partners and the relationship. The researcher is an intern Counselling Psychologist who, through training has been equipped with the necessary skills in couple's therapy to mediate and debrief should the need arise. I as the researcher also provided contact details of the Rhodes University Psychology Clinic in the event that the couples needed to be referred for emotional support.

#### **3.7.5 Reflexivity**

As a researcher, I acknowledge that knowledge production occurs within particular socio-cultural and political contexts. It is important that the researcher addresses any ethical issues pertaining to this that shape the research process (Palaganas, Sanchez & Caricativo, 2017). One question often asked is, why this study and why this topic? I suppose in the process of recruiting participants and thinking about particular questions to ask during the interview, this was something I had to time and time again reflect on. I am a Black women in her late 20s who

identifies as heterosexual, and I am IsiXhosa home language speaking. Growing up in one of the biggest townships in South Africa called Mdantsane in East London in the Eastern Cape, I was exposed to a number of traditional marriage ceremonies that took place near my home. I often watched in excitement the joy that amaXhosa had as they sang and danced in celebration. My grandmother also told me stories about the time she got married and the various parts of the wedding process she was engaged in. What sparked my interest, however, is the conversations she would have with young married women and occasionally couples who came seeking guidance on matters of married life and how she would often remind them of the process of ukuyalwa and some of the teachings that took place there. Having been interested in couples work from my undergraduate years, I often wondered how existing couples literature particularly in a country like South Africa where the larger part of the population took part in traditional marriage ceremonies seldom spoke to this.

In the process of collecting data and during the interviews I was aware of my ‘insider’ position of being a Xhosa speaking researcher, this evident where the couples felt they needed not to explain reasons for not disclosing particular details of certain cultural practices because it was forbidden. This appeared to strengthened rapport and trust during the interview process as it meant that I would be engaging with the couples from a place of knowing. I was also very much aware of my ‘outsider’ position as I was an unmarried young women doing research on a traditional practice that I had not experienced myself. This in many instances was an occurrence as I listened and reflected upon statements that were made by the couples during the interviews. There were instances of being a learner getting educated on the processes and the meanings they carried. Ofcourse what had sparked my thought process about this study was how in almost all conversations I had listened to when ukuyalwa was spoken about, was how it appeared to reinforce ideas of patriarchy. In fact, in the little literature that does exist the main focus or angle taken was that of cultural practices and their continued reinforcement of

patriarchy and inequality in marriage relationships. I myself being “born free” was raised with the understanding and belief that all humans are equal and are equally able to live life in whatever way they choose to. In terms of ukuyalwa and marriage, the couples would go on to explain as they told their stories that for them this was far more complex.

It is also my belief that my heritage as an African and cultural practises that form part of that heritage are important. These all formed part of my identity, it is this identity that led me to seeking answers, ways of seeing that would recognise all parts of a person’s existence in Africa. I was introduced to and adopted African Psychology lenses. This psychology spoke to my view of the world, that as Africans we ought to be able to story our experiences of our traditions and practices in a manner that places us at the centre as the creators of the narrative. Upon analysis of the data, it is through self-reflection and reflective engagement with my supervisor that I was encouraged to continuously relook at and re-engage the data and ask myself questions that go beyond my interpretation and speak to the constructions made by the participants. A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis aided me in the meaning making process of the data, it was not without difficulty as Foucauldian thought was new to me. As I grappled with Foucault’s thoughts and concepts such as knowledge-power nexus and technologies of the self, the data began making more sense to me as these gave guidance to a way of analysing the gap that was apparent to me when it came to literature on cultural practises and marriage. Through the process of my continued analysis of the data as I engaged with the couple’s constructions of marriage and ukuyalwa, I was met with surprising reflections at each turn. The biggest being one where participant H1 brought to our attention to a consequence of some of the assumptions made by these gender roles that were laid out during ukuyalwa. Society assigns these roles and does not think that they may be potentially a cost even to the man, who is meant to be submitted to. Patriarchy hurts us all. This engagement displaced a bias that I myself held. This opened a point of further investigation and engagement with the literature and provided

points of provocation during the study. The study did not however negate to trouble instances where gender inequality became apparent in the study, instead it was now focused on the double-edged sword of patriarchy. Issues of the impact or effects of the socio-political history of the country also became apparent, these as described in critical African psychology often negated when analysing data based on studies done in South Africa. The iterative process of reflection and engagement with the data and literature helped to advance the analysis and thus increase the rigour and trustworthiness of the study.

### **3.7.6 Release and publication of findings**

I as the researcher was obligated to make sure that the study proceeded correctly and ensured that the participants were not deceived in any way by the findings of the study. It was also my responsibility as the researcher to ensure that the participants were informed about the findings of the study in a manner that would protect their confidentiality and anonymity (Arifin, 2018). Feedback to the research participants was provided in the form of a summary of the findings of the research study that was communicated via email or telephonically, as determined by the technological resources available to the participants.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

Having outlined the research methodology employed in this study, this chapter will begin with a brief review of the research questions and then present the constructs that emerged from the analysis in response to these research questions and objectives. Referring back to the previous chapter, the overall aim of this study was to explore Xhosa couples' constructions of ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction. The study sought to discover:

- How do these Xhosa couples construct marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction?
- What discourses do these couples draw on to construct ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction?
- What implications does this reading of these constructs have in terms of relationship satisfaction?

### **4.1. Discursive constructions: How Xhosa couples constructed marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction, and the discourses they used in these constructions**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) was used to analyse the data collected during the interviews with the couples. Various discursive constructions of 'marriage', 'ukuyalwa', and 'relationship satisfaction' were identified during the interviews with the couples. As the researcher, I was interested in the various ways in which the couples constructed the discursive objects as they spoke through their experiences. Using discourses of culture, religion and partnership couples discursively constructed marriage as 'divine unity', the 'unification of families' and as 'partnership'. Ukuyalwa was constructed as a 'gendered process'; they also spoke about ukuyalwa as a comparison between tradition and modernity'; lastly, they constructed ukuyalwa as 'foundation'. Satisfaction was constructed as

‘open communication’ and as ‘work’. The couple's positions shifted in their talk where in some instances they were 'learners' and 'initiates'; in these instances, the couples were passified. In other instances, they were positioned as being 'knowledgeable' and 'experts'; these indicating that the couples had a sense of agency. These constructs are explored and explained in more detail in this chapter whilst the prominently circulating discourses of culture, religion and partnership are discussed in chapter 4. Throughout the chapter the couples are referred to as H: Husband and W: Wife and I the researcher, as participant S.

#### **4.1.1 Constructions of Marriage**

The three couples interviewed for this study summoned discourses of religion to construct marriage. These constructions of marriage involved faith, cultural beliefs, and the concept of partnership. Marriage was constructed as a divine unity, a unification of families and a continuously evolving partnership.

##### ***a) Divine Unity***

Through the use of religious discourse, the couples constructed marriage as a “Godly institution”, or a divine unity. In the excerpt below, we see that marriage was constructed as something that comes from God. This constructs marriage as divine or holy.

##### *Interview 1*

W1: ok uhm *umtshato kuthi as a couple and ke a couple that is in ministry, esindisiweyo; umtshato kuthi* (for us as a couple, one that is in ministry at that are born again Christians; marriage to us) is an institution, it's God's institution, it's a God-ordained institution, that's what it means *kuthi* (to us), *usuka kuThixo, wadalwa nguThixo wawungcwalisa ngokwakhe then wazisa abantu emtshatweni, ukubazisa emtshatweni* (it's from God, it was created and ordained by God and he then brought it to people, he brought them into the marriage) it is also, he plays a role in that as well,

*ukudibanisa abantu ababizele* (bringing people together and calling them) into his institution.

### *Interview 3*

W3: So, I was praying for a white guy kanti uThixo undibekele umXhosa ozandinika ezizinto bendizifuna (that God has a Xhosa guy for me who would give me all the things I wanted).

The couples made various references in their talk about marriage as being a “Godly institution”. One couple referred to their construction as “the way churches would put it”. Here we were met with the understanding that marriage is something that comes from God, where two people are united and become one. W3 speaks to how she believed that the partner she would end up marrying had been chosen for her by God. Using the discourse of religion, couples constructed marriage as faith-based “being bigger than the self and being ordained by a higher being”.

Marriage is therefore seen through these examples as a divine process where two people are united, but they were also constructed as “having different views and different backgrounds”. Below the couples also troubled what is constructed as divine unity by acknowledging that even though the two are uniting into one there is individual subjectivity.

### *Interview 2*

H2: uhm *ndizoyibeka njani* (how will I phrase it), I would say *ngoluhlobo* (in the sense that) most churches would actually put it; two people put together but with different views and different upbringings uhm trying to make everything seem one *andiyazi noba* (I don’t know whether) it’s making sense or but *ja* I think that’s what marriage is about.

Here H2 spoke to the trouble of constructing marriage as divine unity. We see him grappling, not certain of this particular explanation or finding the language to capture this

divine process. It is difficult for H2 to convey the processes by which two people from two backgrounds and upbringing can become one. Hence the description of this process as 'divine. As per the religious discourse, it is difficult to capture divine processes in human terms, hence instances such as "*ndizoyibheka njani?*"(How do I put it) and "*andazi noba* (I don't know if it's making sense?". H2 then proceeds to say that the two people that are put together have differences and come from different backgrounds and walks of life. This brings to the fore the human element in what is regarded as divine unity.

### ***b) Unification of Families***

Couples summoned discourses of culture to construct the unification of families. Here marriage was constructed as the union of not just the two individuals getting married but their families becoming one as well.

#### *Interview 1*

H1: But now, because I'm a black man, because I'm an African person, African people are communal people. *Ngabantu abenza izinto* (they are people who do things) as a collective you know. So uhm I therefore understand that, *umtshato, umakazi wakhe uba ngumakazi wam* (in marriage, her aunt becomes my aunt) you know, it's a joining, it's a coming together of families, we are extending families.

#### *Interview 3*

W3: Even though *abantu abakhulu* (the elders) are saying *intobana uzunyamezele, emtshatweni uyokhiwa umzi* (you must persevere and build this family), which I understand very well that me *ndiyintombi yakwaNantsi ndizongena kwaNantsika* (I was born in the Nantsi family and now I'm moving to the Nantsika family) I need to, my responsibility is to build this family.

In the above extract H1 described how marriage can be experienced as “complex” and as an “inheritance of a new family”. In his explanation he brought to light that where marriage is concerned there is more than just the couples to be considered, here we consider the different backgrounds, we consider the different family customs and traditions, and how these two different ways of living and existing must come together and be one. Whilst ideas of an expanding family tree are conjured, W3 also draws our attention to the complexity that the inheritance of a new family also means carrying particular expectations and new responsibilities as a wife.

c) *Continuously evolving partnership*

Couples also constructed marriage as a partnership, as “something we build together, work on it together”. Marriage was continuous where the couple was working on it together. In this way, marriage was not constructed as a one-time event but a process of “continuously building together”, as is captured in the extract below.

*Interview 2*

W2: for me marriage means continuously building together, it’s not something that you can say *ungena emtshatweni* (you’ve entered into marriage) and *ja* that’s it. It’s everyday work, it’s partnership, it’s friendship, it’s companionship, you both have to work on it.

The use of words such as friendship and companionship add positive connotations to the partnership.

*Interview 1*

W1: *into yobana* (the thing between), these two people, *funeka besebenze umtshato wabo* (have to work on their marriage); they will become one *nhe* (right) because the

two shall become one, that's what the bible says. And in that becoming one, there is a lot of work to be done and there are a lot of things to be taken into consideration.

### *Interview 1*

W1: It is possible for *uba umtshato ufe* (marriage to die) it is also possible for *umtshato intoba uphile, ube alive* (marriage to be alive). *Zombini ke ezizinto zixhomekeke kwi-efforts zababantu balapha kulomtshato, mfundisi khawuphefumle* (both these things are dependent on the efforts of these two people, pastor please say something).

W1 summoned the discourse of religion to construct this recurring “divine unity” construct and noted the context around it: continuously building. This divine unity was seen occurring in conditions or the context of continuously building. What both W1 and W3 were bringing up in the extract above was that there needs to be a willingness and responsibility from both parties involved to put in the effort to make the marriage work. It was not something that was done in one day but a process where both people were committed to working on it.

Some of the key constructions of marriage made by the couples had to do with marriage as a “divine union”. The union was not only of two people getting married but a unification of their families as well. In the first extract from W1, the couple was seen to be committed as often this union “requires work, it's about communication and love. Discourses of religion, culture and partnership circulated in the talk with couples, to produce constructions of divine unity, the unification of families and partnership in relation to marriage.

#### **4.1.2 Constructions of Ukuyalwa**

The couples spoke about the discursive object of ukuyalwa by constructing ukuyalwa as a ‘gendered process’ and as ‘a foundation’. The ideas of tradition and modern times were also prominent in the talk with couples. We see here how the couples drew on discourses of

culture, speaking to instances where they were influenced into taking up particular positions during these practices. We see also how they questioned and troubled these positions by then drawing on fluid and modern ideas of culture to position themselves as active participants in this practice.

a) *Ukuyalwa as a gendered process*

The couples constructed ukuyalwa as being a process. This process encompassed various rituals which carried particular meanings. The couples drew their construction of the discursive object from a cultural discourse. The clothes and name given to the new wife were described as a means of initiating the new member into the family. This family was not only referring to those who were living but it also included those who had come before,- the ancestors; so they too could recognise her. Here the wife took the position of an initiate being taught the rules, expectations, and guidelines of her new life as a member of the family. This new life brought about a new role and position that the wife would have to take on in the new home. This construction of ukuyalwa spoke to something that the wife went through without the presence of her partner. As such ukuyalwa became a ‘gendered process’. This process being one where the wife was subject to teachings about various ways she could serve in her husband’s homestead reinforces patriarchy. By the husband being absent at this point, it speaks to how the women is expected to fulfil all the desires of the male’s family. She is expected to prove her worth as an “ideal wife” to a husband whom no responsibility is laid.

*Interview 3*

W3: *ndanxityiswa kwi separate room, wayengekho yena ngoku ndandinxityiswa* (I was dressed in a separate room, he wasn’t there when I was being dressed)

*Interview 1*

W1: *So ezazinto nolwahlobo uzawunxityiswa ngalo lama dark uxelelwa ukuba uzawunxiba ezi-print, ilength funeka ithi, eza-towel ezatyali, abamama, lo ngubani apha ekhaya umbiza ngoluhlobo, lo umbiza ngoluhlobo, igama lakho uzawuthiywa ngoluhlobo, li-meanisha ukuthi. Kwathiwa mna ndingu-Zukhanye and I should come and bring light in this family and nabo kengoku xa betshatisa unyana wabo befumana umakoti, bazithatha ngobana uThixo uzobakhanyisela, uzobanika ithemba elitsha uyayibona.* (So those things and the way they dress you in those traditional outfits and prints, their length and the towel and shawl, being told how to address different people in the family of your in-laws, the new name that you get and its meaning. They named me Zukhanye, and I should bring light in this family and when they were marrying me to their son, they believed that their son was getting a bride and that God would also bring light to their family and bring new hope you see).

Here, ukuyalwa was a gendered process, one that represented a becoming for the wife, involving various things: Firstly, teachings about norms and practices of the new family. Secondly, it spoke to a (new) becoming where the wife was given a new name e.g., Being named uZukhanye. Lastly, this newness in the form of a new name spoke to the ideas of hope and blessing. Here we see the summoning of religious discourses again.

**b) *Ukuyalwa tradition and modernity***

Dichotomous constructions of ukuyalwa were expounded upon using discourses of (traditional) culture and modernity. The discursive object of ukuyalwa was compared between two temporal socio-cultural contexts.

W1: ok uhm ukuyalwa komakoti okanye komfana otshatayo komkhwenyane; bobabini ababantu kuqala bamele ukuze bayalwe bobabini (let alone that in our days focus )iba on the female yokuba ayalwe. Ngokungathi lo unumfana yena ingathi wazi yonke, he is equipped already (ok uhm ukuyalwa of the bride or the groom who is getting married, first of all both these people should go through it, let alone that in our days the focus of ukuyalwa is usually on the female. It's as though the groom already knows everything, he is equipped already).

*Interview 1*

H1: Eza negotiations zenziwa ngamadoda nhe, that is why uzawufumanisa ukuba umntu ongutata, lo mfana uphaya, kuyalwa lo sisi nhe as if (Those negotiations are done by men right, that is why you will find that a man, the groom, while the lady is going through ukuyalwa right as if), now the society assumes that the man is more capable , he's got this figured out already umntu esidinga ukumxhobisa ngulo (the person who needs to be equipped is this one). That is one of the loopholes apho ekuyalweni (when it comes to ukuyalwa) because the one who is gonna be uhm handling the steering wheel is not capacitated for that huge task, now that is the first loop apha ekuyalweni (when it comes to ukuyalwa).

*Interview 3*

W3: uhm eish into yokuyalwa mos andithi into yakudala (ukuyalwa is an old concept) it's mainly based on the woman or on the wife uba (that), you need to be a good wife you must do so.

We consider here how culture has various ways in which it can be conceptualised. There are narrow and broad definitions and conceptions of culture. Those that are narrow then produce dichotomies or divided ways of thinking about culture which can be understood as (a) being traditional or (b) being modern. Consider how W3 speaks to ukuyalwa as an old practice.

Ukuyalwa as a custom is associated with a particular time and context, where the wife was the only one who had to undergo such a process. It was interesting that in the earlier interview data and the context section ukuyalwa had been spoken of as something that men are introduced to during **ulwaluko** for men, this inclusive of their roles and responsibilities for marriage. One then considers how this may have a reason to do with the assumption that men “already know everything” , are ”well-equipped already”. This speaking to how ukuyalwa during marriage would be focused more on the women. However, what W1 underscores for us is that because ukuyalwa is the divine unification of two people and their families, as well as it being partnership, ukuyalwa at this point should perhaps involve both the woman and man - i.e., a recap/refresher for men. What became evident is that as the couples made this construction the women or wives particularly drew on words such as “overwhelming, scary and anxious” when speaking about the process of ukuyalwa. This underscores for us how women experience the unification of families as initially anxiety-provoking. Understandably so as most of the processes that take place during ukuyalwa are focused on the woman and expectations that not only her partner but both families have of her. The fate of the marriage is made to rest on her shoulders. This would further speak to the assumption that the husband is perfectly fit and equipped for marriage.

H1 and his wife’s (W1) rhetoric of men "already knows everything” and “already being equipped” painted the picture of society's assumptions as being of consequence when referring to the narrow definitions of culture as being stagnant when speaking about ukuyalwa. He alerted us to the dangers of society's ideas about men's capabilities and how these could have a negative impact even on the men themselves. He continued to speak about how the husband in the marriage relationship is positioned to lead however is not equipped on how he should do this during processes of couple and family unification and the foundations of partnership. The consequence of this rhetoric is that the wife in the marriage relationship is left responsible for

the success of the marriage. We see how he then troubled the idea of the wife being placed as the responsible party with the assumption that the husband was well-equipped. In this way he is emphasising and endorsing the need for a ‘refresher’ being needed for men after the process of **ulwaluko** . This is important as they are now stepping into what is constructed as a divine unity, unification of families and partnership; they, as described by the husband, would need tools for this new stage in their life.

### *Interview 3*

W3: uhm eish into yokuyalwa mos andithi into yakudala (ukuyalwa is an old practice) it’s mainly based on the woman or on the wife uba (that), you need to be a good wife you must do so.

We see in the excerpt above how W3 draws our attention to a particular time in history where this custom was practised in a gendered manner and this manner interpellated women into the ‘good wife’ position which contributes to marriage satisfaction. We note here how this practice was seen as a gendered process as it responsabilized the wife for the success of their marriage. The assumption being that the husband was already equipped for marriage. This is evident in the current study as two of the three husbands reported that they were not involved during the process of ukuyalwa. As a result, they drew on words such as “relaxed” in their construction of ukuyalwa speaking to the ideas of having no particular responsibilities or involvement at this time. In contrast, one of the wives used words such as “overwhelming, scary and anxious”, as noted above. This also speaks to the construction of ukuyalwa as a gendered process, as outlined in the previous construction. In the below extract, however, one participant drew our attention to how this construction of ukuyalwa as gendered process held great consequences for him as a partner – leaving him ill-equipped.

By troubling the gendered process of ukuyalwa, the couples then availed for themselves a position where they were active participants and holding equal responsibility for their marriage, i.e., partnership in the process of ukuyalwa. Couples summoned the discourse of partnership to construct marriage and we see here that the couple in Interview 1 extend this by recommended that ukuyalwa too should be undergirded by partnership. What the couples also alluded to was that even though this custom is one that has been passed down through generations and based fundamentally on a what was considered as needed at that time in history, there is something to be gained from it. This where the broad definition of culture comes in, as here culture is able to evolve to speak to the times at which it takes place (i.e. it is socially mediated). The couples going through ukuyalwa together speaking to partnership is so that they could both be equally equipped to take on the responsibilities that lie ahead of them in their marital life. We see here the emergence of the ideas of satisfaction, that as H1 cautioned when one is left behind during ukuyalwa there are often consequences within the marriage relationship. This powerfully illustrates the grappling between traditions of old, and how they position the partners in particularly gendered roles, and how, in the present-day couples find it difficult to integrate the consequences of these ‘olden day’ traditions in partner roles that are negotiating more equal responsibility for the relationship.

c) *Ukuyalwa as Foundation*

Couples also constructed ukuyalwa as an informal school. A school is an environment that is a place of learning where one is equipped and taught about various topics. Here the couples positioned themselves as learners and the elders as experienced and knowledgeable teachers. The teachers equipped the learners on the journey ahead: what they could expect, and some ideas on how to navigate their way through this journey. The couples considered this school as informal as it often drew from the experiences of the elders themselves, with no “objective basis”. Here we see how the formality and informality of this school is based on the

couple's perceptions of whether or not is “objective”. Here the couples appear to measure the legitimacy of the school according to modern ideas of education. One attended a particular institution in order to legitimately speak or advise from an “objective view”. This means that what is being taught is what the elders believe to be what works. This school however, even though it is deemed as "informal", seems to have a value attached to it as the couples spoke about it as laying a foundation that they could build on. We see here an example of workings and productions of the knowledge-power nexus in terms of what and who is constructed as legitimate knowing and knowers respectively. Here the couples make the decision as when to apply the knowledge that they receive from the elders this speaking to how power is implicated in the search for when to apply particular knowledge. There is also evidence that when this knowledge is applied it carries particular real-life effects and ultimately becomes truth.

One participant made an interesting analogy in the extract below. She asked us to think of this “informal school” differently, instead as a “literature review”.

### *Interview 3*

W3: So we're using ukuyalwa as our literature chapter apha emtshatweni (in marriage), we need la literature review chapter for us to ukuyazi ukuba singena entweni enjani (to know what we're getting into) and what do we need to do for us to be satisfied and happy apha emtshatweni (in marriage) as I said, mos xa uyalwa ininzi into ethethwayo, kuhluza nina uba (a lot is said during ukuyalwa but it's up to us to decide that) this is going to apply to us and this is not going to apply to us. So xa nithatha (when you take), it's like you can't write literature ungakhange ufunde (without reading) of what was said before, so let us take ukuyalwa in that context. We need to be informed ukuba isukhaphi lento singena kuyo okanye iyaphi ukwenzela intobana sizoyazi nathi

ipurpose yethu apha emtshatweni uyabo (need to be informed about the origins of what we're getting into or where its headed so that we know its purpose in marriage you see).

Here the idea is that the couples were not merely vessels taking in everything that was taught and everything that was said and applying it to their union. They had the agency to choose what was useful for them as a couple and utilize that knowledge when they needed to in their marriages. Here the couple summoned the partnership discourse whereby working together they possess the ability to choose what works for them. They positioned themselves as experts in their marriage possessing the ability to acknowledge and make use of the knowledge imparted to them by the elders and utilizing it in a way that gave them agency to decide what worked for them as a couple.

### *Interview 2*

H2: I think *ezinye izinto zifika* (you remember) when something similar happens or *ibikhona, ukhe uyithethe intoba umntu othile wakhe wathetha into ethile* (you then remember that someone once mentioned this) at a certain stage in your life. But I think sometimes when you do remember *izinto oyalwe ngazo* (things that were said during *ukuyalwa*) it comes *ngelixesha* (at a time) when you do actually need it or don't need it depending on *i-* (the) situation that you are going through *ukhubone* (you know)

### *Interview 3*

W3: So we're using *ukuyalwa* as our literature chapter *apha emtshatweni* (in marriage), we need la literature review chapter for us to *ukuyazi ukuba singena entweni enjani* (to know what we're getting into

Certainly, Participant W3 and Participant H2 also seemed to agree with this particular analogy of a literature review, thus placing the couples in a position of active participants and co-authors of this foundation.

*Interview 3*

W3: So ikunika nje i- (it gives you the) shape and also to reassure us that, lento niyiqalayo ayiqali ngani (what you have just begun), it has been there before and izawubakhona (it will be there) even after you guys. But what's important is that, le ndlela yomtshato noko iyahambeka (marriage is doable) *because nathi siselapha, sizawububha sisengoNobani ke amagama akudala* (we are also still here as No-so and so).

The couples explained the role of ukuyalwa in their marriage relationship. Here ukuyalwa “as a foundation” was understood to give shape to the couple’s marriage as the couple often took from their learnings from ukuyalwa and applied these to their marriage journey. These “learnings” were said to “equip” the couple so they could be able to handle whatever came during marriage. Ukuyalwa was also seen as “normalising” the idea that marriage was doable even though it could be “overwhelming” at times.

*Interview 3*

H3: I like the point about foundation because I think really it gives us a good foundation you know, in fact it's lessons; lessons that we have to take forward as married people. It's the repetition if I can put it that way, of what was done previously because uhm it's lessons that were given to our parents so now they are given to us, which we have to keep and give them to the next generation.

The couples also brought forth the importance of passing down cultural practices from one generation to the next. Participants also highlighted that even though ukuyalwa was foundational, it had particular troubling consequences for the couple. This then in turn had an impact on marriage. In the extract below One participant described this consequence.

*Interview 1*

S: *Uthi umfundisi zange ndixhotyiswe* but I was expected to play the role, *uthi yena umama umfundisi hayi mna kwathethwa* so many things and some of them stayed with me for so long. I-role *kengoku yala practice yabonakala kanjani* in the marriage itself *okanye ke ibonakala kanjani* in the marriage itself? (What is the role of this one-sided *ukuyalwa* and being equipped as the pastor has just said, that he was waiting, but he was never equipped even though he was expected to play the role of being the head of the family that you were starting, what is the role that was played by *ukuyalwa* in the marriage itself

H1: err, *Sphuxolo yabonakala sisi wam yabonakala but ke manditsho ukuba* (it was evident my sister let me say that) it was for the first few years *zethu emtshatweni* (of our marriage) because as you go along, you end up finding substitutionary measures to equip yourself because you begin to realise and feel the gap that, I am actually not equipped here, then you find other means of equipping yourself.

By extending the rhetoric of men as “already knowing everything and “already equipped”, H1 in the extract above identified the gaps in “*ukuyalwa* as a foundation”, noting the process was not so solid as men were left out of the counsel of *ukuyalwa* and thus left ill-equipped. He thus positions the gendered process of *ukuyalwa* as a threat to *ukuyalwa* as a foundation. He explained that because he was not “equipped” this bore consequences for his marriage. He had to find alternative ways of equipping himself. Here the husband was no longer passive to the consequence of not being equipped. He positioned himself as “capable”, and a “researcher” and by doing this was able to prepare himself. However, he also raised the point that the gap needed to be filled, by “equipping” both husband and wife to contribute to the marriage. Importantly this point again highlights the gendered practices of *ukuyalwa*, and the

ways in which couples grappled with integrating what is referred to as an old, more stagnant and narrow description of culture where certain traditions are passed down the same (ukuyalwa as a traditional practice for women that reinforces particular gender roles) and the new way of thinking this speaking to modernity or broader definition where culture is able to evolve to speak to current times (about their relationships in the current times with a sense of wanting more equal and shared responsibility for the relationship).

#### **4.1.3 Constructions of Relationship Satisfaction**

Words such as “measurable”, “growth”, “met desires”, and “development” were used to construct relationship satisfaction as work and open communication by the three couples. For relationship satisfaction to occur, couples reported needing to continuously “work” towards it in the marriage. By constructing relationship satisfaction in this way, the couples held themselves responsible for the success of their marriage. The following extracts display how couples occupied active roles in making sure that they were satisfied in their marriages.

##### **a) *Satisfaction as work***

###### *Interview 1*

W1: Uhm you know for me I think *ukuneliseka nhe emtshatweni* (marital satisfaction), you always guage yourself, you always take stock you always try and measure whatever means of measure *ozozisebenzisa* (that you will use) in terms of growth and development and happiness uyayiqonda, so mna that’s what I do(see, personally that’s what I do).

### *Interview 3*

H3: It's important because we need to dedicate ourselves to ensuring that we are satisfied when we are married. If there is a problem, if for example we are in disagreement, we deal with that accordingly to say look, I don't like this, I don't like this. I think *bendikhe ndathi kuwe, enye yezinto esidla ngoyithetha is that isifuba sam sishushu* (I mentioned this to you earlier, the principle of saying I have something in my chest) uhm so I think that's one of the things that keeps us going, to say look, I've got this problem, can we talk about it? And then we sit down and solve that problem and then we address it right there

From the extracts above we see that couples bring forth firstly the construction of marriage as "work" that needs to be done, and that by dedicating oneself to doing this work then one can ensure that they are satisfied in their marriage. By constructing relationship satisfaction in this way, the couples reinforced the idea that their positions are active ones where they were reliant on each other to make sure that the marriage was a satisfactory one. Although in previous discussions the wife was responsabilized in the process of ukuyalwa (i.e., what was constructed as a foundation, albeit with gaps) and the husband was pacified by being left out and assumed as competent, here we see couples constructing the marriage as a partnership, and relationship satisfaction as working together to grow, build, develop, work, etc.

#### ***b) Satisfaction as open communication***

The couples made several references to marriage as "involving communication". The ability of the couple as a unit to communicate was seen as being important as it contributed positively to the relationship of the couple.

### Interview 3

H3: Uhm but when you are together *pha endlini nisokha phaya endlini* (in your house trying to build), I think that's the most important part and also being able to communicate, communication is key in the whole process. *Intobana ndikwazi ukuthi hey ndihlutshwa yinto ethile* (to be able to say, this is bothering me).

### Interview 2

H2: But in order for *zonke ezozinto zenzeke* (all of these things to happen), there needs to be clear cut communications in which sometimes we do struggle *ngaleyo into nathi* (with that as well). But *ja* (yes) two people *ababekwe boyi-2* (who are working together) to try and make things work as one.

Communication was seen as a very important part of the process as it allowed for the couples to be able to speak their minds on various issues. The couples positioned themselves as responsible and knowledgeable as they, through communication, could share their thoughts about issues that involved them as a unit but also matters involving families as well. Communication here is an action orientated around the complex unifying of individuals and families in which relationship satisfaction occurs. The couples revealed that within this complex unity of two families, the couples still exist as their own unit capable of making decisions about their union and their families through open communication with each other. This speaks to the idea that in order for satisfaction to occur, it needs open communication to be present between the dyad. So, it is the context in which positive feelings about marriage occur.

### Interview 2

W2: then *ndimbuze intobana* (I asked him), are they considerate of the fact that *wena* you've got a family *uyayibona lanto* (you see what I mean). Are they considerate of the

fact that we plan ifinances zethu (our finances)? Are they considerate of the fact that we are aware of lo msebenzi (the ceremony) that's coming up and we are aware of iexpectations zethu (our expectations) in terms of ixesha lethu ukuba kufuneka sibephi funeka sithini (in terms of our time, where we need to be and what we need to do).

### *Interview 2*

H2: ). I think also a sense of communication you know, being able to know the love language of your partner, you know when you know what your wife or husband loves uhm I think you will go a long way, so I think that's key.

When the couples spoke about the discursive object of relationship satisfaction, they seemed to summon previously made constructions of ukuyalwa as 'foundation' and "gendered process'. Consider how W2 in the extract draws our attention to an occurrence where her husband's family had laid particular expectations on them as a couple, these possibly going against how they do things in their own household. It is through open communication with her partner that she was able to voice her dissatisfaction and they together came up with a way of sharing their dissatisfaction with the family in a manner that would be respectful but also helpful to them. By doing this the couple were from then onwards much more satisfied with the engagements with the family, this having an impact on their satisfaction as a couple. These constructions contribute to producing relationship satisfaction. Through the foundation, they can build on the lessons they received and grow as a couple in their marriage. The construction of ukuyalwa as what can be regarded as a gendered process provides the partners with marital roles that are familiar and predictable. They can from the shortcomings of some of the lessons on family life and the roles of each of the spouses communicate what they do and do not agree on and shape their marriage in the way they would like it to be as they draw on 'lessons' from ukuyalwa. Consider how Nwoye (2006) introduces the hypothesis of role theory, this being

that couples occupy particular positions that come with obligations and privileges within marriage. These are said to be culturally embedded, and the fulfilment of these expectations speak to how securely attached the couples will feel in the marriage.

### *Interview 3*

H3: And then the same process *naxa sitshata apha kuye kuthiwe unkosikazi ukuba mhlonele umyeni wakho njenge ntloko yekhaya uyaqonda* (even when we get married, even for the wife that she must submit to her man as the head of the family). So, I think *nayo lanto iye icontribute kwisatisfaction, such that xa unga feeli* (I think that it also contributes to marital satisfaction such that when you don't feel), I've heard *kwamanye amadoda uba* (other men say that) I don't feel like *ndiya-respectwa as intloko yekhaya* (I'm being respected as the head of the family).

Participant H3 summoned the cultural discourse of the gendered roles of husband and wife within a marriage relationship. He spoke to how the fulfilment of the said roles contributed to relationship satisfaction. Of course, as mentioned before, ideas around submission, respect, and the head of the family hold varying meanings depending on the position one speaks from. The positions availed to the couples here are produced from knowledges conveyed via the teachings of elders drawn from generationally transmitted discourses of culture. The fulfilment of such expectations seemed to hold meaning where relationship satisfaction is concerned. However, the issues of gender roles that society assigns to couples is one that requires exploring. Feminist scholars would however trouble the said ideas of wives being submissive to their husbands and the husbands requiring respect as head of households (Ozaki & Otis, 2017). These norms and roles reinforce notions of women being nurturing, caregivers and emotional. These are not negative attributes; however, their implications can somehow shape women's lives. These roles also affect males as well as they are labelled as being tough,

primitive and providers . These assumptions can also end up having consequences for them as well (Ozaki & Otis, 2017).

These ideas of satisfaction then seem to build on the ideas of ukuyalwa as a comparison of the way things have been done over time, in two different contexts. As seen in the extracts above the couples appear to be grappling with how the integrate the ideas of ukuyalwa as tradition custom as passed down by their elders with the modern realities in a way that brings about satisfaction within the marriage. What we observe here is the sometimes-competing discourses of culture and modernity. This often producing a divide between how couples speak about traditions and the modern times.

In this chapter I was interested in the ways in which couples spoke about the discursive objects ‘marriage’, ‘ukuyalwa’, and ‘relationship satisfaction’. Couples deployed discourses of religion, culture and partnership to constructed marriage as a divine unity, the unification of families, and partnership. They constructed ukuyalwa as a gendered process, tradition and modernity, and a foundation. Relationship satisfaction was constructed as work and open communication.

Prominently circulating discourses produced varying subject positions for members in a marriage relationship. Couples used discourses of culture to construct marriage and ukuyalwa. Here couples occupied positions of being learners and initiates. Words such as “overwhelming” and “consequences” to captured some of the constraining consequences of narrow conceptions of culture. The couples however also positioned themselves as experts, knowledgeable and responsible. When couples deployed more of a broad conception of culture, more agentive subject positions were availed. They coupled this with discourses of partnership to construct ways of building satisfaction within their relationships. Here the couples brought

forth the understanding that they were able to locate this discursive object as both good and bad and were able or capable of learning from the process of ukuyalwa, taking on what suited them as couples. They then utilize these learnings in ways that helped them build their marriages.

Discourses of culture, religion, and partnership appeared to be the main discourses that couples often drew on as they made their discursive constructions of the objects. Cultural and religious discourses provided the couples with a particular way of being able to talk about the discursive objects of marriage and ukuyalwa. Where culture was concerned couples drew on the idea that marriage was more than the union of two individuals but the union of two families, including their customs. Thus, we see the couples speaking to constructions such as “her aunt becomes my aunt”. A religious discourse gave couples the language to construct marriage as “God’s union”. Partnership discourses were also drawn from by the couples as they grappled with narrow and broader understandings of culture this speaking to their ideas of what is tradition and the modern world. They spoke about having the ability to “choose” what worked for them as a couple in these current times that we are living in. When talking about marriage, ukuyalwa, and relationship satisfaction the couples constructed these discursive objects in ways where they took up both passive and active positions.

Having addressed my first and second research question: “How do these Xhosa couples construct marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction?” and “What discourses do these couples draw on to construct ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction?” I will now address my third research question “What implications does this reading of these constructs have in terms of relationship satisfaction?” in my discussion chapter which follows.

## Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to identify various discursive constructions made by Xhosa couples about ukuyalwa as a cultural practice and how this may have an impact on the couple's relationship satisfaction. I was interested in the various ways in which the couple's constructed marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction. In order to do this, I employed a critical African psychology lens (Ratele, 2019). A critical African psychology lens speaks to the ideas of decolonizing mainstream psychology. Here the couples are recognized in their African centeredness. This means that one needs to recognize the socioeconomic, political histories and cultural matrices that the couples are interlocked into (Ratele, 2017a). The couples constructed ukuyalwa as speaking to the ideas of tradition and modernity. Here the ideas of how things were done by a different generation in a different context, where the process was mainly one that was gendered brought up a time in the political history of the country where certain professions were reserved for particular genders. As a result, the roles that were availed to the spouses in the marriage relationship aligned with the times in which they lived. Men typically spent months away from home working and the women were at home minding the house and children. This was a time in the sociopolitical history of the country where the apartheid policy-controlled people's movement, many of the black communities were stripped of their land and forced to live outside of the urban areas. In order to provide the young men had to leave behind their families to take on work as mine and farm workers. This being the then government's way of getting cheap labor. It was only at a later stage that they introduced work for women, this work was specifically tending to the house (Richter, Chikovore & Makusha, 2010). Consider how culture and certain traditions can be described as being passed down from one generation to the next. The couples spoke about the current context, where things have shifted. The roles that the elders had to take up before as married couples have changed over time. In the current so-called modern day, everyone is considered equally able to fulfil any kind of

work. The couples then trouble the narrow definition of culture, and rather they deploy a broader definition that speaks to culture as being fluid, able to evolve with time.

A critical African psychology lens concerns itself with the ideas of the power-knowledge nexus, that is the functions of power and knowledge (Ratele, 2017b). We consider how ukuyalwa as a Xhosa custom is one the couples constructed as being a foundation, where they are educated and equipped for the new phase- of- life they are going into that is marriage. Here ukuyalwa is a point where couples learn from those that came before, they acquire knowledge from them. This speaks to experiences that current literature has not spent enough time exploring. In as much as the couples spoke about the educative role that ukuyalwa played in the marriage relationship, they did not negate touching on issues of power and gender inequality that formed part of ukuyalwa. The couples also spoke to the ideas of power being circular and not possessed by a particular group as they continuously troubled and engaged positions that ukuyalwa had availed to them as a couple. They pointed to particular experiences and instances where they had brought forward their own ideas and ways of doing things. By doing so, the couples challenged parts of what perhaps the elders viewed as knowledge, in an attempt to demonstrate their ability to forge their own unique way of going about the marriage relationship. Couple number 2 for example spoke about a time where they had to explain to the husband's family that they could not shoulder a traditional ceremony that was meant to take place simply because it was considered a part of their responsibility as the husband was the eldest at home. They respectfully explained to the family how they go about their financial decisions as a dyad and asked that they be approached much earlier in future instances.

A social constructionist paradigm was used as it concerns itself with the identification of different ways that social reality is constructed (Burr, 2015). In this particular study this

refers to how ukuyalwa was constructed by the Xhosa couples. I explored the conditions of the use of these constructions in the couple's marital relationship and the consequences of these constructions for their relationship satisfaction. The study interviewed 3 couples all based in different parts of the South African Eastern Cape province. A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) was employed as a means of understanding the various social realities that the couples spoke to in their interviews (Willig, 2013). FDA allowed me as the researcher to consider the role of knowledge and power in the way these couples constructed their social realities, and how these realities were realized, revealed, and legitimized. This analytic approach gave opportunity for the couple voices, to be heard as legitimate speakers (Khan& MacEachen, 2021).

Through FDA, I came about findings of the various ways in which the couples construct marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction and the discourses they drew from in making these constructions. I will firstly begin with a brief explanation of each of the discourses that the couples pulled from. Then I will proceed to discuss how these may align with the discourses circulating in current literature reviewed in chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis.

### **5.1 Discourses circulating around marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction**

In the preceding chapter, the couples drew on three different discourses in their discursive constructions of the objects under study namely marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction.

### 5.1.1. Religious Discourse

All three couples drew from a religious discourse. This discourse speaks to forms of social interactions in which religion is foregrounded. This included settings or features of a social interaction within the couples that had religious characteristics. Examples of these included when W3 spoke about how she had her husband met and she thought that he was not the one for her. After some years had passed, they found their way back to each other and she saw this as God intervening. This also aligns with a previously drawn on talk by one of the couples where they constructed marriage as God's institution that he calls his people into. The couples described kitchen parties that they had which formed part of the marital ceremony. These were conducted in a Christian manner where different elders from the church came to offer gifts and words of counsel to the couple. As an example of this discourse, we consider how H1 who had spoken about the consequences of not being equipped during ukuyalwa then decided to take up the opportunity to conduct his own research and find his own meaningful ways that could possibly help him be better equipped. Religious literature, conversations, and gatherings with other married couples in ministry were meaningful ways that he found helpful in equipping him for his marriage. As a result, things changed in term of satisfaction for both him and his wife in the marriage. It was evident from my interviews with these couples that they drew from this religious discourse to create their social worlds, meaningful identities, and significant relationships.

Symbols also form part of the religious discourse as they are recognized as having/ carrying meaning in people's social environments (Thomas, 2011). In these interviews symbolism became apparent in examples where the couples spoke about the naming of the wife and how the name that was given carried a particular meaning for what they family had hoped for, a particular gift they had received from God. This discourse seemed to be interwoven with

culture. One notes that a religious discourse is one of divinity and holiness that is meant to be permanent.

Couples made many references to divinity/faith. Here couples spoke to the holiness of marriage as a Christian ideology. God was seen as the authority that calls people into his institution. The couples were to follow what was God's intent for the marriage. The religious discourse encompasses many different symbolic objects such as the bible and sermons that people often draw on to construct God's messages. The couples also pointed to the human element in the divine unity, bringing to the fore the idea that they have the ability to decide and follow their own thought processes about what their marriage may be like. The couples made use of the religious discourse to construct marriage in varying ways. For one of the couples, this discourse appeared to be how they identified as they spoke about being a couple that is saved and is in ministry. This discourse guided not only their behavior as a married couple but how they spoke about the ideas of how a married couple should be like. This discourse was also seen where ukuyalwa is concerned where during the naming ceremony the bride aligned the name they were given as speaking to them being a blessing from God. However, this seemed to be as far as this discourse went where ukuyalwa is concerned. Marital satisfaction was spoken about in accordance with scriptures that two shall become one and work together to make their marriage a success. This discourse speaking to the ideas of satisfaction as being about communication and work, teamwork.

From what we have observed from the interview talk, the religious discourse was used by the couples in this study to guide how they understood their roles in their marriage, and to give them a sense on the expectations of how to behave and show up in their relationships. The couples also appear to use it in making sense of some of the processes that take place during

what one can term a traditional or cultural ceremony. They negotiate particular positions for themselves through the understandings of the scriptures to separate parts of ukuyalwa that align and do not align with them. By doing so having an effect on their satisfaction. Interestingly very little is written about the role of religion in maintaining relationship satisfaction in the current international and African literature. Much of the research that exists speaks to how the couple's shared religious beliefs and ways of communicating appear either predict marital satisfaction or to open up and close particular opportunities for satisfaction (Dudley & Kosinki, 1990; David & Stafford, 2015). This is apparent in both international and local literature (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001). The literature however is missing the link between religion and other forms of beliefs unique to the couple and how couples often make sense of the connections between the two and their impact on marital satisfaction. Perhaps one can posit about the earlier mentioned permanency in the religious discourse, that the scriptures and verses are never changing, and these are interwoven within cultural practices that are fluid and able to continuously change with time. Couples demonstrate here their ability to disrupt parts of even their religious beliefs that may not be in agreement with their own unique beliefs.

### **5.1.2 Discourses of Culture**

As acknowledged in the begin of this text, culture is a complex term, and defining it is difficult as many utilize the term in various ways (Mio et al., 2016). In this particular study I noted that the term culture has been deployed as historical, a group's heritage and traditions (Sibani, 2014 cited in Sibani, 2018). These include activities that represent a particular social group or tribe, which have been passed down from one generation to the next. Mio and colleagues (2016) describe culture as a way for people to connect with their heritage, express ideas and solve difficulties. As such a cultural discourse speaks to a common view that encompasses various practices and knowledges passed down through generations. Examples

of ways in which couples in this study employed this cultural discourse include their way of describing the different processes that take place during a Xhosa traditional wedding. The customs and rituals that are followed that are viewed as being meaningful as they connect them to their ancestors. Consider how these processes take place or occur in a particular manner, this being a manner that has been passed down from generations to generations. When the clothing that the bride changes into during ukuyalwa was described in the interview talk, there appeared to be a similarity between how each wife described it and its symbolism. The males also alluded to the idea that for them ukuyalwa was something that was introduced by elderly men during initiation. This also speaks to a passing down of particular customs and ways of doing things from generation to generation. These are meaningful processes where the couples learned about particular roles they would now take on in the marriage, the symbol of a new stage in their relationship.

These examples speak to cultural discourse as a series of learned behavior patterns of a group through observation, trial and error and imitation (Carbaugh, 2017). The couples in this study make reference to this process of learning in their descriptions of ukuyalwa as an informal school, where they had learned about what to expect in marriage and ways of being from the knowledge and experiences of their elders. This knowledge is said to be one that was passed down through generations. We consider how they speak about the ideas of how this school was a literature chapter, if one thinks of literature review it involves reading on and considering work of scholars that came before. These scholars set the context to which the research is located, so we consider how the elders are those that came before, a generation to learn from.

Of importance here is the idea that how we view knowledge has an impact on how we analyze culture (Carbaugh, 2007). We consider how this custom is one that the couples construct in many different ways. It is one they gained a great deal of knowledge from in terms of equipping them for marriage. This knowledge is one that they can use at their own discretion, where they can trouble parts of it that they do not agree with. This is knowledge received from the experiences of others and not any form of established theory or intervention. One considers how these indigenous forms of knowledge can often be illegitimated in literature or scholarly work, often for not aligning with what is described as theoretically sound and established forms of knowledge. As Critical African psychology informs us, we also need to be aware of and trouble instances where these forms of knowledge reinforce patriarchy and gender inequality. We are responsible for disrupting instances where the rights of others may be infringed upon during these traditional practices.

The construction of marriage as unification of family is situated on the idea that African people are communal people which was raised by one of the couples. They are said to be a collective people. Therefore, It is put forward that marriage is something that brings the families of the two individuals getting married together to become one. We see in the Chapter 1, how the process of marriage is one that is lengthy with various rituals and customs taking place throughout that process and the two families interacting throughout. One may see how the couple's constructions may speak to this, as the purpose of the process is to build relations between the two families. The cultural discourse is one that is brought forward here as it speaks to customs that are passed down from one generation to the next. The unity here is spoken of through the ideas of ancestral connection.

In accordance with African traditions, in order for the bride to be recognized as legitimate, there needs to be a connection and introduction to the groom's ancestors as a new member of the family. This is why in chapter 1 consulting with family before marriage is viewed as a crucial, as the idea is to make sure that the couple does not share the same clan name as this would mean that they are related. The idea of marriage here moves past the discourse of a relationship being a private affair, but it is rather one of cultural beliefs and values. The couple here is subject to the power of traditions and customs that they have to follow in order for their union to be one that is recognized. This seems to be in line with what Olisa (2016) explained in chapter 1 around the importance of family consent when it comes to marriage proposals.

The unification of families as a construction is an African marriage process that mostly takes place at the home of the husband as the literature informs us. The marital process is said to encompass various activities which mostly pertaining to the bride being introduced to the husband's ancestors and family. In Chapter 4, W3 drew attention to her experience or reality of this unity. This unification is often one where the wife is responsabilized, as during this time they are introduced to various expectations and duties they are to take on in their new home. These pressures often creating an imbalance of power between the couples. As the male throughout this period is on the outside waiting, this may be seen as further reinforcing the ideas of patriarchy. The wife is responsible for catering to the needs of the husband's family and is subjected to the ideas of a woman's place being of a homemaker who is responsible for taking care of the family.

This cultural discourse is very prominent in the ways in which couples make sense of their relationship, their roles, and identities within their marriage. It also features in the way

they grapple with integrating narrow and broad definitions of customs such as ukuyalwa. As mentioned above, the couple speak to the ideas of culture being fluid and able to evolve, by doing so it can speak to the current expectations of what is considered as making a relationship work. Interestingly very little is written about the role of a strong cultural identity in maintaining relationship satisfaction in the current literature. While international scholars (Kazim & Rafique, 2021; Takavol et al., 2017) make reference to various predictors of marital satisfaction, culture is written about as a predictor of marital satisfaction by focusing on the ideas of individualistic or collectivist societies (for example Britana et al., 2019). Here the ideas of cultural discourse are not spoken about in-depth, the studies negate to explore further how specific cultural customs and traditions play a role in how couples make sense of their relationships and their influence on marital satisfaction.

### **5.1.3 Discourses of Partnership**

Partnership was a discourse employed frequently by the three couples who participated in this study. When one thinks of the word partner various associations come to mind. In a relationship this can refer to one's significant other, but the same phrase is also used to describe those that we share a business interest with. The discourse of partnership contains assumptions, expectations, practices, and particular subject positions that then give rise to particular versions of an intimate relationship (Willig, 2013). Examples from the interviews with the couples in this study include where couple number 2 spoke about an incident where the H2's family had made particular expectations that the couple couldn't fulfil and did not agree with. Here the couple used this experience as an opportunity to speak about how they would work together as partners to put forward to the family how they go about deciding their finances and responsibilities as a dyad in their marriage and home. Another couple spoke to how they were

able to meet each other's needs and desires for growth and happiness by working together as partners in the fulfilment of these.

These examples suggest that the discourse of partnership here included working together as a team to bring about satisfaction within the marriage, through the establishment of roles and responsibilities and how these would be carried out. This also involves meeting each other's expressed desires and expectations and availing opportunities to resolve conflict where they would not see eye to eye.

The partnership was one the couples also constructed as having the ability to evolve. This is the only instance where I saw the couples speak about their individual selves. They acknowledged that even though their union is set within broader connections to their families and backgrounds, they are both equally responsible for making the union a success. The couples spoke about what marriage means to them. We consider how Foucault speaks about technologies of the self, these based on the premise that humans have agency and self-determinism. One would often think about how the traditions and family expectations on the bride could speak to an exertion of power or the passing down of what is considered knowledge and a way of doing things from one generation to the next. The couples have the ability to take knowledge that has transcended generations, decide what works for them, challenge and resist what may not work for them (McMay, 1992). This evolving partnership is the context in which the divine unity and unification of families take place.

The importance of partnership speaks to the ideas that the couples work together in ensuring that the marriage is satisfactory for both partners. Here the couples explained how it

was important for them to continuously work together as a team, in making sure that each of their needs are met and that their shared goals for growth and development within the marriage were also met. By doing so the couples opened up opportunities for satisfaction within the marriage. This partnership was not only on expectations they had of each other as a dyad but spoke to the ideas of how they would engage with their extended families in ways that would not only please them but please their families as well. This appeared to have an influence on their satisfaction.

International literature informs us of how couples working together as a team through open communication, establishing expectations and making room for autonomy, all of which predict marital satisfaction (Kazim & Rafique, 2021). However, there is little written about how these predictors involve more than just the dyad, but their broader family systems as well. This being the need for an African centred work, which asks that we consider the larger community of family to which the dyad belongs as forming part of the factors that predict satisfaction. As mentioned by the couples before, establishing open communication for example had to be something that extended to the rest of the family in order for there to be harmony in the relationship.

Ukuyalwa speaks to a custom that takes place among other customs during Xhosa marital ceremonies. The couples constructed this discursive object as having various meaningful stages. They identified the clothing and naming of the bride as carrying significant meaning, as a symbolic way of introducing the bride to the ancestors of the groom so that they could recognize them as legitimate members of the family. In chapter 1 of this study, we were introduced to the notion that marriage can take on various meanings, depending on one's social

reality. One writer, Mbidi (1969) posited that for African people, marriage is about the departed and the living. This cultural discourse was a dominant theme the couples seem to draw on as they made their constructions of ukuyalwa.

We consider the processes or stages of ukuyalwa, the clothing and naming ceremonies. Here as described by W1 and 3, these take place without the presence of the groom. Here the bride is often informed about what each of their clothing items mean and symbolize and how their names also have a particular meaning. The symbolism of the clothes and the name given often speaks to the expectations and obligations that the bride has to the family and to their son. Interestingly both the bride and groom are passified as they are often positioned as children. Consider how the groom is not involved, and the bride receives these expectations from the elders as what they expect from them for their son and their family. We consider how ukuyalwa may be constructed as a gendered process.

This is what literature in chapter 2 informs us. That particular cultural beliefs and customs push forward the ideas of a power imbalance that only serves the men in the marriage relationship. Let's then consider how H1 brought about a caution, a call to be aware that the men often are passive participants in the process. He speaks to the assumptions of society, that make out men as being already capable and perfectly equip, these often have consequences for them as they are left out of the process where they would equally gain and are asked to steer a ship without any form of training. Alerting us to how the genderedness of ukuyalwa is often not beneficial to them, as most literature would often put forward. I consider in literature and through the interview talk how the husbands spoke of ukuyalwa as a custom they were long introduced to before marriage. Literature informs us that during ulwaluko, the new young men are taught about various ways of behaving as men, amongst those are the expectations and responsibilities they would one day hold in marriage. One then is to ask, is the knowledge passed on at this time enough to the point where one would assume it would be what the couple

needs in their marriage relationship? We also consider the age at which initiation takes place and whether or not it would be something that one could keep with them up till marriage? Or a way of doing things they would still subscribe to later on in their lives. Hence in the chapter before this one I consider how the husband being present during ukuyalwa could be a refresher for them of what they had learned during ulwaluko. The couples here take up a more affirmative and active positions as they trouble particular knowledge systems that have been utilized to regulate their actions and exert power on them.

Cultural discourse and religious discourse are at the basis of ukuyalwa. Consider how for the family the clothing and naming of the bride is thought of as a way of welcoming her and introducing her to those departed, this considered an important part of union. The naming in particular where the name is symbolic of the bride as God given, a blessing to the family. These discourses speak to how to the couples and their families these ceremonies do hold a particular important and symbolic meaning as it speaks to their connection to their traditions and beliefs.

The dichotomous construction of ukuyalwa brings forth the discussion of culture and modernity. With the couples troubling ukuyalwa, they introduced the idea that culture is not stagnant. It is something that continuously evolves with the changes in times. In the olden days or what one would term apartheid era, the ideas of work that was fit for males and females was structured in such a way that the expectation would be for men to perform hard labour and for the woman to perform more domestic chores. So, it appears that these particular ways of existing became the roles that men and women took up during those times. In equipping young men, the concern would be more about hard work and provision and women more on domestic chores. It remains that these ways of being that were meant for surviving during those times have remained some of the teachings that have been passed down till this day. Modernity then speaks to the update in some of these teachings to match life as it exists today. Critical African

psychology as a lens has aided me in being able to understand importance of cultural and socio-economic and political history of the country as one with an impact on the construction of ukuyalwa as a gendered custom. It is one that has also aided in the questioning of imbalances in a marriage relationship that may come as a result of ukuyalwa. Both spouses pointed to various consequences they each experienced as a result of some of the ways that these teachings were done. These including gender inequality or patriarchy and an assumption of gender specific roles that H1 mentioned as having left him ill equipped for marriage.

The couples also constructed ukuyalwa as a foundation. This foundation was constructed as an informal school from which the couples learn but also as a literature review chapter. Their ideas of an informal school were based of the understanding that the elders provide lessons based of their own experiences and not necessarily from an objective understanding. Here we see what Foucault referred to as knowledge-power nexus, how over time and modern and western ideals/power influence what may be seen legitimized as being knowledge. However even though these lessons were perceived as being based of the elders' experiences, the couples found them to be useful. The discourse of literature review also spoke to the educative role that the lessons and guidance from the elders during ukuyalwa play in the couple's preparation for marriage life, this is evidenced in the interview talk of W3, H2 and 3. Indigenous African Marital therapists also concurred with this as they put forward the importance of counsel provided by elders to the married couples, as it also teaches the couples how to handle conflict within marriage (Nwoye, 1991).

Literature also informs us at times some of these lessons can have a negative impact on the couple particularly as evidenced in the study by Pretorius et al., (2014). This is also evident in the constructions of ukuyalwa as a gendered process during the interview talk, here this negative impact was highlighted to be experienced by both men and women. What literature does not inform us is the ideas of the couples taking on an active and expert role

where these teachings are concerned. In this study the couples pointed to the ideas that they often take what they as the couple think is valuable to help them in their marriage and utilize that. H1 as mentioned earlier on in the chapter spoke to how he became a researcher and further developed his understanding of marriage on his own after recognizing the impact of not being a part of ukuyalwa.

## **5.2 Implications of these findings for understanding relationship satisfaction**

Relationship satisfaction as described in Chapter 2 of this study refers to the feelings that couples have relating to satisfaction, happiness, and the joy they experience in their marriages or long-term relationships (Kharpuri and Priya, 2019). The chapter introduces to us various contributors to relationship satisfaction as presented by studies conducted mainly in North America, Canada, and Europe. Here key aspects of relationship satisfaction included romantic love, expectations, communication, autonomy, and personality.

Relationship satisfaction was constructed by the couples in the study as something that the couples continuously worked together to build. Discourses such as “measurable through growth and development within the marriage relationship” and “each partner feeling that their desires are met” seemed to be how the couple’s constructed satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was also constructed as “open communication”. These constructions align well with the international literature, in that communication is viewed as one of the factors that predict and promote marital satisfaction (Kazim & Rafique, 2021). This appears to be the case in the South African study by Nganase and Basson (2019), where the findings spoke to communication as among predictors of marital satisfaction.

The couples in this study also alluded to constructions of marriage and ukuyalwa as having a crucial role in relationship satisfaction. The couples introduced the idea of the complexity of marriage as being something that is bigger than just the two of them, as involving families and as a divine union. The discourses of partnership, culture and religion were all pulled on by the couples when they considered what made them happy or satisfied in their relationships. What these findings reveal in terms of marital satisfaction is the idea that in order for the couples to be satisfied in their relationship, they consider their family's happiness a major contributor to their satisfaction. This is why they continuously engage their loved ones when it comes to various parts of their relationship. They negotiate ways of engagement that would not only be beneficial to them but to their families as well. The divine connection to God and family forms a big part of their happiness. These constructions of marriage also brought about opportunities where the couples were able to trouble instances that infringed on their values and beliefs as a dyad. Satisfaction in this way existed as the existence of the couple in harmony with their families and their faith.

Social constructionists are of the idea that how we see and experience the world is as a result of interactions in societies (Burr, 2015). When open communication is available to the couples, this promotes their ability to consider what they require of each other as a unit but also involves the realization that the unit extends to broader families and societal systems. The couples in this study made reference to being called to consider what would also bring joy to the entire system.

Ukuyalwa is positioned as a cultural process and through this custom the couples are able to not only build but also grow, and in so doing, find relationship satisfaction. This is evident in the manner in which the couples speak about ukuyalwa as playing an educative role

in the marriage relationship. From ukuyalwa the couples were equipped in various ways and these ways prepared them not only for the good times but for the difficult parts of marriage as well. The couple could take from these teachings as apply to their marriage whenever they needed to. They could look back and remember what they were taught and this at many moments normalized whatever difficulties they had been facing and be able to work through them, this promoting satisfaction in the marriage. Yet we also see how couples grappled with the challenges of narrow definitions of culture as being stagnant, these were instances where issues of inequality and patriarchy were raised by the couples as they constructed ukuyalwa. It was evident that parts of this practice reinforced ideas of the wives being meant to serve the husband and the husband needing not to take on any responsibility in making their marriage a success. In some of the instances the couples found themselves as passive participant being fit into pre-determined roles that did not benefit their relationship. This had an impact on the satisfaction the couples were experiencing in the marriage at this point. Culture (as problematic as this concept may be) has also been shown to play a significant role in relationship satisfaction. The findings of this study demonstrate the ways in which ukuyalwa is so intricately weaved into these couples' expectations of what a marriage is and how to do it successfully in order to feel satisfied and happy within the union. But as a consequence, ukuyalwa also has implications about roles of men and women in relationships with potentially cause internal conflicts for the individuals in the dyad. This process of making sense of the degree of meaningfulness of cultural values in the relationship may play an important role in couple conflict and distress as couples try to navigate the role of cultural practices in their relationships.

A broad definition of culture speaks to it as being more fluid and able to evolve to meet the modern ideas of relationship responsibility. The couples in this study as active participants felt able to consider their elders' teachings and decide for themselves what they do and do not

agree with. This freedom to grapple also seemed to link with relationship satisfaction. This ability to be able to speak up and trouble some of the teachings they had received during ukuyalwa came in the later years of the couple's marriage. I noted how both Couples 1 and 2 who had been married the longest, spoke about how in the first few years of their marriage they relied mostly on the guidance of the elders as they were new to marriage. They commented on how they felt at this time that they didn't have the language or ability to speak about their own views with the elders. It is with age, experience and time that realized they had to speak up and start implementing change in order for them to experience true satisfaction in their marriage relationship.

In summary, in the current literature on relationship satisfaction there have been common factors that have continuously appeared in literature, communication, intimacy, expectations, level of education and autonomy being some of them (Tavakol et al., 2017; Khazim & Rafique, 2021). What a critical African psychology has allowed for in this study is the emergence of knowledges and ways of seeing that were not historically legitimized or thoroughly investigated in the majority of the studies. These include the powerful discourses of religion, culture and partnership which have emerged as powerful factors in relationship satisfaction, through positioning these African couples as the center and experts of their own lived experiences.

### **5.3 Strengths and Limitation of this study**

This study sought to add to existing work on understanding relationship satisfaction and African traditional practices like ukuyalwa that form marital processes. Studies of relationship satisfaction in the South African context are few, and one particular strength of this study is that it adds to the growing body of knowledge concerning cultural customs and

their potential impact on relationship satisfaction. By involving both partners in the research process, it has afforded the opportunity to understand how both husband-and-wife construct marriage and the cultural customs involved in their marriage as a unit. This is something fairly novel in the current literature on cultural customs and marriages. The couples were interviewed together, they had the opportunity to story their experiences as a dyad. One could note how through their retelling, they at certain moments were of aid to each other as it would happen that one would forget certain processes that took place during ukuyalwa. As they spoke through their experiences, reminding each other of particular details as they proceeded, this added to the richness of the story which was helpful during the interviews.

The use of a critical African psychology lens was also a strength of this study. This lens allowed for the couples to be located within a holistic understanding of their personhood. This lens allowed for the social realities of the couples to be recognized as legitimate forms of knowledge. Current literature trends tend to be mainly focused on North American, Canadian and European voices about relationship satisfaction and allow little room for explorations of the influences and histories that form part African peoples' experiences of relationship satisfaction. This trend is often left unquestioned and becomes the dominant way of understanding relationship satisfaction. But in this thesis Foucault's power-knowledge nexus has allowed me as the researcher to put forward forms of constructions and realities that are often silenced and negated, even pathologized.

The data collection method and sampling procedures were further strengths of the study. Through the use of social media advertising, the researcher could locate couples from various parts of the Eastern Cape and by using Zoom could connect with them from a distance.

The use of social media however seemed to also be a limitation as it was difficult to locate or attract the older generation of couples for the study. Another limitation of the study was the small sample size. These findings are based on only 3 African couples' experiences, and while they provide valuable initial insights, further work is needed to tease out these findings more thoroughly in other couple experiences.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for future research**

This study focused on the constructions of marriage, ukuyalwa and relationship satisfaction made by couples in the Eastern Cape. Future research could possibly expand the sample size, and the geographical reach to other parts of the country as South Africa is made up of various tribes that have varying customs that are meaningful during the marital ceremonies. Future studies could also possibly involve the elders that are involved during these processes to gain an understanding of how they construct these cultural customs.

Furthermore, future studies could focus on the constructions of the male spouses in the marriage relationships, in understanding the cultural traditions and customs that form part of the locations or positions they hold in romantic and marital relationships. This appeared to be a topic for further exploration and engagement during the interview talk. This could also be said about the female spouses in the marriage relationship. These studies might consider going beyond heterosexual relationships and look consider queer relationships. Over the years many queer couples have engaged in traditional marriage processes, it would be of benefit to focus on their construction of marriage, satisfaction, and the role which culture plays in their union. A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis would be a valuable way of analysing these constructions as it would offer insights into how power is exercised in ways that would legitimize certain forms of knowledges over others.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Semi-structured interview schedule for Xhosa Couples

#### *Ishedyuli yodliwano-ndlebe elungiselelwe izibini zamaXhosa*

Begin with (*Qala nge*):

- An introduction between interviewer (Siphuxolo) and participants (couples)  
*(Intshayelelo phakathi komphandi (Siphuxolo) kunye nabathathi-nxaxheba (izibini))*
- Distributing the information sheet and informed consent form before the interview and use this opportunity to confirm that the couple understands everything and are happy to consent  
*(Ukudlulisa iphepha lolwazi kunye nemvume enolwazi ngaphambi kodliwano-ndlebe kunye nokusebenzisa eli thuba ukuqinisekisa ukuba isibini siyayiqonda yonke into kwaye siyakuvuyela ukuvuma)*
- Thank the participants for agreeing to be a part of the project  
*(Ukubulela abathathi-nxaxheba ngokuvuma ukuba yinxalenye yeprojekthi)*
- How did you hear about the research project?  
*(Uyive njani ngale projekthi yophando?)*
- What motivated you to want to participate?  
*(Yintoni eye takukhuthaza ukuba uthathe inxaxheba?)*
- Enquire about any questions the participants have before the interview  
*(Buza ngayo nayiphi na imibuzo abanayo abathathi-nxaxheba phambi kodliwano-ndlebe)*

1. Please tell me the story of your relationship: how you met, what your living arrangements are, etc.

*(Ndicela undixelele ibali lobudlelwane benu: indlela enadibana ngayo, isimo sokuhlala senu njalo njalo)*

2. What does 'marriage' mean to you as a couple?

*(‘Umtshato’ uthetha ukuthini kuni njengesibini?)*

3. Have you experienced 'ukuyalwa'?

*(Ninawo amava 'okuyalwa'?)*

- a. If so, could you describe the process to me and your experience of it?

*(Ukuba ninawo, ningandichazela inkqubo kunye namava enu kuyo?)*

4. What role does *ukuyalwa* play in Xhosa marriage relationships?

*(Yintoni indima edlalwa kukuyalwa kubudlelwane bomtshato wamaXhosa?)*

5. What does 'marital satisfaction' mean to you as a couple?

*(Kuthetha ntoni 'ukwaneliseka emtshatweni' kuni njengesibini?)*

6. For you as a couple, what is the relationship between *ukuyalwa* and marital satisfaction?

*(Kuni njengesibini, yintoni ubudlelwane phakathi kokuyalwa kunye nokwaneliseka emtshatweni?)*

## Appendix B

### Informed consent

*(Imvume enolwazi)*

#### RHODES UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

#### AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH

#### PARTICIPANT

*(DYUNIVESITHI YASE-RHODES – ISEBE LEZIFUNDO ZENGQONDO*

*ISIVUMELWANO)*

We \_\_\_\_\_ (couple's name) agree to participate in the research project of Siphuxolo Bikwe on the *Constructions of ukuyalwa and marriage satisfaction: experiences of Xhosa couples in the Eastern Cape.*

*(Thina \_\_\_\_\_ (amagama esibini) siyavuma ukuthatha inxaxheba kwiprojekthi yophando ka Siphuxolo Bikwe esihloko sithi: **Ulwakhiwo lokuyalwa kunye nokwaneliseko lomtshato: amava abatshatileyo abangamaXhosa eMpuma Koloni**)*

We understand that *(Siyaqonda ukuba):*

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements of a Master's in Counselling Psychology degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 0658115470 (cell phone) or [g21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:g21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za)(email). The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Prof Megan Campbell and Ms. Nqobile Msomi in the Psychology

Department at Rhodes University, who may respectively be contacted on 0466038047

(office) or [m.campbell@ru.ac.za](mailto:m.campbell@ru.ac.za) (email) and 0466037417 (office) or [n.msomi@ru.ac.za](mailto:n.msomi@ru.ac.za) (email).

*(Umphandi ngumfundi oqhuba uphando njengenxalenye yeezifundo zesiDanga seMasters kwiPsychology kwiDyunivesityi iRhodes. Kunokuqhagamshelwana nomphandi kule nombolo 0658115470 (unomyayi) okanye [g21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:g21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za) (imeyile). Iprojekthi yophando ivunyiwe yikomiyi/iikomiti ezifanelekileyo zokuphatha kwaye iphantsi kweliso lika Njing Megan Campbell kunye no Nksz Nqobile Msomi kwiSebe lePsychology kwiDyunivesithi yaseRhodes, ekunokuqhagamshelwana nabo ngokulandelayo kule nombolo 0466038047 (e-ofisini) okanye [m.campbell@ru.ac.za](mailto:m.campbell@ru.ac.za) (imeyile) kunye 0466037417 (e-ofisini) okanye [n.msomi@ru.ac.za](mailto:n.msomi@ru.ac.za)*

*(imeyile))*

2. The researcher is interested in the Xhosa couples' constructions of ukuyalwa and marriage satisfaction.

*(Umphandi unomdla kulwakhiwo lwezibini ezingamaXhosa zokuyalwa kunye nokwaneliseka emtshatweni).*

3. Our participation will involve (*Ukuthatha inxaxheba kwethu kuya kubandakanya*):

a. Being interviewed by Siphuxolo, This interview will be audio/video recorded and will last between 60 and 90 minutes.

*(Ukuba nodliwano-ndlebe noSiphuxolo. Olu dliwano-ndlebe luya kushicilelwa ngerekhoda/ividiyo kwaye ubude buyakuba kangange mizuzu engama-60 ukuya kwengama-90)*

b. Agreeing to be video/audio recorded during the interview with the researcher. During the interview questions will be asked about the role ukuyalwa in our marriage and the meaning of marital satisfaction to us as a couple.

*(Ukuvuma ukuba kushicilelwe nge rekhoda/ividiyo ngexesha lodliwano-ndlebe nomphandi. Ngexesha lo dliwano-ndlebe imibuzo iyakubuzwa malunga nendima yokuyalwa emtshatweni wethu kunye nentsingiselo yokwaneliseka emtshatweni kuthi njenge sibini.)*

4. We may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but we can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of our life which we are not willing to disclose.

*(Sinokucelwa ukuba siphendule imibuzo ngezinto eziyimfihlo yethu, kodwa sinokukhetha ukungaphenduli nayiphi na imibuzo emalunga nemiba yobomi bethu esingazimisela ukuyiveza.)*

5. We are invited to voice to the researcher any concerns we have about our participation in the study, or consequences we may experience as a result of our participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. The Rhodes University Psychology Clinic may be contacted on if we require more couples support on 046 603 8502 or email at:

psychologyclinic@ru.ac.za. If you reside outside Makhanda, it will be important to maintain links with the clinic and you would be offered online or telephonic therapy to for containment.

*(Siyamenywa ukuba sithethe kumphandi ngayo nayiphi inkxalabo esinayo malunga nokuthatha kwethu inxaxheba kolu phando, okanye iziphumo esinokuzifumana ngenxa yokuthatha kwethu inxaxheba, kwaye ezi ziqwalaselwe ngokwanelisayo. Kungaqhagamshelwana neZiko leNgcebiso leDyunivesithi yaseRhodes ukuba sifuna inkxaso yezibini ethe chatha kule nombolo 0466037070. Ukuba uhlala ngaphandle kwaseMakhanda, kuya kubaluleka ukugcina*

*unxibelelwano nekliniki kwaye uya kunikwa unyango nge-intanethi okanye ngomnxeba ukuze uthintelwe.)*

6. We are free to withdraw from the study at any time – however we commit ourselves to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or we have concerns about our participation which we did not originally anticipate.

*(Sikhululekile ukuba singarhoxa kuphando nangaliphi na ixesha – nangona kunjalo siyazibophelela ekuthatheni inxaxheba ngokupheleleyo ngaphandle kokuba kwenzeke iimeko ezingaqhelekanga, okanye sinekxalabo malunga nokuthatha kwethu inxaxheba ebesingayilindelanga ekuqaleni.)*

7. The report on the project may contain information about our personal experiences, attitudes, and behaviors, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

*(Ingxelo yeprojekthi inokuqulatha ulwazi malunga namava ethu obuqu, izimo zengqondo, kunye nokuziphatha, kodwa ingxelo iya kuyilwa ngendlela eya kuthi ikwazi ukuba singakwazi ukukhonjwa nanguye nawuphi na umfundi)*

8. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a mini dissertation; this will be done in fulfilment of requirements of the Masters in Counselling Psychology. The results may also be presented in the form of academic presentations to the department of psychology and a research article published in an academic journal. Dependent on the consent of the couples, the results may also be used by the researcher (Siphuxolo Bikwe) to inform future research studies. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained, and our names and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not

been involved in conducting the research, unless we indicate to the contrary/recognise that as a public figure, our identity will inevitably be/become known in which case we agree to and accept the loss of confidentiality.

*(Umphandi unenjongo yokupapasha iziphumo zophando ngohlobo lwe-mini dissertation; oku kuya kwenziwa ukuzalisekisa iimfuno zesifundo seMasters Counselling Psychology. Iziphumo zisenokunikezelwa ngokohlobo lweenkcazo-ntetho zemfundo kwisebe lezengqondo kunye nenqaku lophando elipapashwe kwijenali yezemfundo. Ngokuxhomekeke kwimvume yesibini esitshatileyo, iziphumo zinokusentyenziswa ngumphandi (Siphuxolo Bikwe) ukwazisa izifundo zophando lwexesha elizayo. Nangona kunjalo, ukugcinwa kwemfihlo kunye neenkukacha ngeerekhodi kuya kugcinwa, kwaye amagama ethu kunye nezazisi aziyi kityhilwa kuye nabani na ongazange athathe inxaxheba ekuqhubeni uphando, ngaphandle kokuba sibonisa ngokuchaseneyo/siyaqonda ukuba njengomntu woluntu, ubunikazi bethu ngokuqinisekileyo buya kuqiniseka ukuba/kwazeke kwimeko apho sivumayo kwaye samkele ilahleko yemfihlo.)*

9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act, it remains our right to request the Researcher to provide us with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity will be achieved. We may request to know how our personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored, and whether it is likely to be used again in further research.

*(NgokoMthetho woKhuseleko loLwazi loBuqu, kuhlala kulilungelo lethu ukucela uMphandi ukuba asinike ingcaciso ecacileyo yendlela ubumfihlo kunye nokungaziwa ukuba kufezekiswa ngayo. Sinokucela ukwazi ukuba iinkukacha zethu zobuqu ziya kugcinwa njani ngokukhuselekileyo, ziyakugcinwa ixesha elingakanani na, kwaye zingaphinda zisetyenziswe kwakhona kuphando oluzayo.)*

10. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act, we possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of a summary of the findings of the research study that will be communicated via email or telephonically, as determined by the technological resources available to the participants unless we elect not to receive feedback.

*(NgokoMthetho woKhuselo loLwazi loBuqu, sinelungelo lokufumana ingxelo malunga nolu phando. Oku kuya kuthatha uhlobo lwesishwankathelo seziphumo zophando oluya kuhanjiswa nge-imeyile okanye ngomnxeba, njengoko kugqitywe yimithombo yeteknoloji ekhoyo kubathathinxaxheba ngaphandle kokuba sikhetha ukungafumani ngxelo.)*

11. By signing this informed consent declaration, we are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies.

*(Ngokusayina esi sibhengezo semvume enolwazi, asiwancami nawaphi na amabango asemthethweni, amalungelo, okanye izilungiso.)*

12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to us, and the original will be kept on record.

*(IKopi yesi sibhengezo semvume enolwazi siya kunikwa thina, kwaye eyoqobo iya kugcinwa kwirekhodi)*

We (*thina*), ....., have read the

above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to us in a language that we understand, and we are aware of this document's contents. We have asked all the questions that we wished to ask, and these have been answered to our satisfaction. We fully understand what is expected of us during the research. *(silifundile olu lwazi lungasentla/siqinisekisa ukuba olu lwazi lungentla sichazelwe ngolwimi esilugondayo, kwaye siyayazi imixholo yolu xwebhu. Siyibuze yonke imibuzo ebesinqwenela ukuyibuza, yaye le*

*mibuzo iye yaphendulwa ngendlela esanelisayo. Sikuqonda ngokupheleleyo okulindeleke kuthi ngexesha lophando.)*

Signed on (Date) (*Isayinwe nge (Umhla)*):

Participant *Umthathi-nxaxheba* 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant *Umthathi-nxaxheba* 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher (*Umphandi*): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Consent to audio/video recording

*(Imvume yokushicilelwa kwe-audio/ividiyo)*

Rhodes University — Department of Psychology

### USE OF TAPE RECORDINGS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM

***(UKUSETYENZISWA KWETEYIPHU EZISHICILELWEYO NGENJONGO  
ZOPHANDO IMVUME KUNYE NEFORM YOKUKHULULA)***

Name of participant ( <i>Igama lomthathinxaxheba</i> )	
Participant's contacts details ( <i>Iinkcukacha zqhagamshelwano zomthathi-nxaxheba</i> )	Email address ( <i>imeyile</i> ): Phone number ( <i>Inombolo</i> ):
Name of researcher ( <i>Igama lomphandi</i> )	Siphuxolo Bikwe
Level of research ( <i>Inqanabo lophando</i> )	Master's in Counselling Psychology
Brief title of project ( <i>Isihloko esifutshane seprojekthi</i> )	Constructions of Ukuyalwa and Marriage satisfaction: experiences of Xhosa couples in the Eastern Cape
Name of supervisor(s) ( <i>Igama lomphathi/abaphathi</i> )	Prof. Megan Campbell and Ms. Nqobile Msomi

**DECLARATION****(ISIBHENGEZO)**

(Please initial/tick blocks next to the relevant statements)

*(Sicela uphawule iibhloko ecaleni kweenkcazeloezifanelekiyo)*

1.	The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me. <i>(Ubume bophando kunye nesiseko sokuthatha inxaxheba kwam kucacisiwe)</i>	verbally ( <i>Ngomlomo</i> )	
		in writing <i>(ngokubhaliweyo)</i>	
2.	I agree to be interviewed and to allow recordings to be made of the interview. <i>(Ndiyavuma ukuba kwenziwe udliwano-ndlebe kunye nokuba olu dliwano-ndlebe lungashicilelwa)</i>	Audiotape ( <i>iteyiphi</i> )	
		Videotape ( <i>ividiyo</i> )	
		Videotape ( <i>ividiyo</i> )	
3.	The tape recordings may be transcribed <i>(Ushicilelo lungabhalwa)</i>	without conditions <i>(ngaphandle kwemiqathango)</i>	
		only by the researcher <i>(ngumphandi kuphela)</i>	
		by one or more nominated third parties <i>(ngumntu omnye okanye ngaphezulu otyunjweyo)</i>	
4. I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to be utilized by the researcher for future research. <i>(Ndinika imvume yokuba ushicilelo lugcinwe emva kophononongo kwaye lusetyenziswe ngumphandi kuphando lwexesha elizayo.)</i>			

Signature of participant (*Utyikityo lomthathi-nxaxheba*) 1: \_\_\_\_\_Signature of participant (*Utyikityo lomthathi-nxaxheba*) 2: \_\_\_\_\_Date (*Umhla*): \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by researcher (*ingqinwe ngumphandi*): \_\_\_\_\_

Date (*Umhla*): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Information Sheet

*(Imvume enolwazi)*

#### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

RHODES UNIVERSITY – DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

*IPHEPHA LOLWAZI ZOMTHATHI-NXAXHEBA WOPHANDO*

*DYUNIVESITHI YASE-RHODES – ISEBE LEZIFUNDO ZENGQONDO*

**Title of the study:**

*Isihloko sesifundo:*

**Constructions of *Ukuyalwa* and Marriage satisfaction: experiences of Xhosa couples in the Eastern Cape**

*Ulwakhiwo lokuyalwa kunye nokwaneliseko lomtshato: amava abatshatileyo abangamaXhosa eMpuma Koloni*

You are kindly invited to take part in a research study conducted by Siphuxolo Bikwe a student counselling psychologist at Rhodes University.

*Uyamenywa ukuba uthathe inxaxheba kuphando olwenziwa nguSphuxolo Bikwe umcebisi osafundayo wezengqondo kwiDyunivesithi yaseRhodes.*

Research aim: The overall aim of this study is to explore Xhosa couples' constructions of *ukuyalwa* and marriage satisfaction

*Injongo yophando: Eyona njongo yolu phando kukuphonononga ulwakhiwo lokuyalwa lwababini abatshatileyo abangamaXhosa kunye nokwaneliseka emtshatweni.*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

### *INTO EKUFUNEKA UYENZILE*

- Attend a once off virtual (via zoom) or face-to-face interview (in your resident room) that will take about 60 to 90 minutes. (*Ukuya kube kanye kwintlanganiso ebanjwe ku-zoom kwi-intanethi okanye ubuso ngobuso kwigumbi lakho lokuhlala okuya kuthatha malunga nemizuzu engama-60 ukuya kwengama-90*)
- During the interview you will be asked questions and engage in conversations about your relationship, *ukuyalwa* and marital satisfaction. These discussions will be recorded and used to provide valuable insights about the role of this Xhosa custom in marital wellbeing. (*Ngexesha lodliwano-ndlebe, uya kubuzwa imibuzo kwaye uzibandakanye kwincoko malunga nobudlelwane bakho, ukuyalwa kunye nokwaneliseka emtshatweni. Ezi ngxoxo zizakushicilelwa kwaye zisetyenziswe ukunika ulwazi olubalulekileyo malunga nendima yeli siko lamaXhosa kwintlalontle yomtshato.*)

### POTENTIAL RISKS

- There is a risk that talking about your marriage relationship with your partners could bring up unexpected feelings, and reactions towards your partners and the relationship. (*Kukho umngcipheko wokuba ukuthetha ngobudlelwane bakho bomtshato nomlingane wakho kunokuzisa imvakalelo kunye neempendulo ezingalindelekanga ngakumlingane wakho kunye nobudlelwane.*)
- In the unlikely event that anyone experiences distress during the interview, the researcher is a student Counselling Psychologist, that through training has been equipped with the necessary skills in couple's therapy allowing them the ability to mediate and debrief. You will also be referred for further couple therapy support at

the Rhodes University Psychology Clinic, the details are available on the consent form signed by the couple at the beginning of the process. If you reside outside Makhanda, it will be important to maintain links with the clinic and you would be offered online or telephonic therapy to for containment. All participants are free to leave the workshop at any point.

*(Kwimeko engalindelekanga yokuba uzive unoxunguphalo ngexesha lodliwano-ndlebe, umphandi ungumfundi oqeqeshiweyo kwezengqondo, kuqeqesho lwakhe uxhotyisiwe ngezakhono eziyimfuneko kwaye ezincedisa ukumelana nale meko. Oku kumenza akwazi ukudlala indima yoba ngumlamli. Uyakuthunyelwa kwakhona ukuze ufumane inkxaso kwiZiko leNgcebiso leYunivesithi yaseRhodes, iikcukacha ziyafumaneka kwifomu yemvume esayinwe sisibini ekuqaleni kwalenkqubo yoluphando. Ukuba uhlala ngaphandle kwaseMakhanda, kuya kubaluleka ukugcina unxibelelwano nekliniiki kwaye uya kunikwa unyango nge-intanethi okanye ngomnxeba ukuze uthintelwe. Bonke abathathi-nxaxheba bakhululekile ukuba bayisihiye iworkshop nanini na.)*

## **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

### ***(INZUZO EZINOKUBAKHO KUBATHATHI-NXAXHEBA KUNYE/OKANYE KULUNTU)***

- For the couple, the benefit may be in receiving the opportunity to talk about their marriage this could allow them to see the various ways they have worked through and overcome challenges together. This understanding can bring couples closer together.

*(Kwesisibini, inzuzo isenokuba kukufumana ithuba lokuthetha ngomtshato waso, oku kunokubavumela ukuba babone iindlela ezahlukeneyo abasebenze ngazo kwaye boyise imingeni kunye. Oku kuqonda kunokuzisa ukusondelelana kwaba babini.)*

- The research study is hoped to provide valuable insights about the role of this Xhosa custom in marital wellbeing, informing couples intervention work with Xhosa couples in the South African context, and add to already existing models and theories pertaining to couples counselling more broadly.

*(Olu phononongo lophando lunethemba lokunika ulwazo oluxabisekileyo malunga nendima yeli siko lesiXhosa kwintalontle yomtshato, ukwazisa izibini ngomsebenzi wongenelelo kwizibini zamaXhosa ngokomxholo wase Mzantsi Afrika, kunye nokongeza kwiimodel esele zikho neethiyori ezibhekiselele kwingcebiso yezibini ngokubanzi.)*

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### ***(IMFIHLO)***

- During the interview the personal information and privacy of the couple will be protected by confidentiality. You can then decide how much personal information you wish to share. *(Ngexesha lodliwano-ndlebe, ulwazi lobuqu kunye neemfihlo zasi sibini ziya kukhuselwa ngokuyimfihlo. Ungagqiba ekubeni lungakanani ulwazi onqwenela ukwabelana ngalo.)*
- The interviews will be audio/video-recorded, the recordings will be sent for transcription and analyzed by the researcher (Siphuxolo Bikwe), along with their supervisor(s): Prof. Megan Campbell and Nqobile Msomi. Any information that can be used to identify the couple will be removed from the transcripts. The findings of

this study will be disseminated through a mini thesis dissertation and a research article, and the researcher will share the summary of the findings with you via email.

*(Udliwano-ndlebe luya kushicilelwa nge-Audio/ividiyo, ushicilelo luya kuthunyelwa ukuze lukhutshelwe kwaye luhlalutywe ngumphandi uSiphuxolo Bikwe kunye nomphathi okanye abaphathi bomphandi uNjing. Megan Campbell no Nqobile Msomi. Naluphi na ulwazi olunokuthi lusetyenziswe ukukhomba isibini luya kususwa kushicilelo olukhutshelweyo. Iziphumo zoluphononongo ziyakusasazwa nge-mini dissertation kunye nenqaku lophando kwaye umphandi uya kwabelana nawe ngesishwankathelo seziphumo nge-imeyile.)*

- Audio/video recordings and transcripts will be stored digitally, and password protected for up to 5 years after publication of findings and any hardcopy consents and transcripts will be stored in a locked unit in the researcher (Siphuxolo Bikwe)'s office. Only the persons given authority by the couples as outlined in the audio/video recording consent form will have access to the recording. Dependent on the consent, the results may also be used by the researcher (Siphuxolo Bikwe) to inform future research studies.

*(Ushicilelo/ividiyo kunye netranscripthi ziya kugcinwa ngokwe dijithali, kunye nepassword ekhuselweyo ukuya kutsho kwiminyaka emi-5 kokupapashwa kweziphumo kunye nazo naziphi na iimvume kunye noshicilelo olukhutshelweyo iyakugcinwa kwindawo etshixwayo kwi-ofisi yomphandi (Siphuxolo Bikwe). Kuphela ngabantu abanikwe igunya zizibini ezitshatileyo njengoko kuchaziwe kwifomu yemvume yokushicilelwa kweaudio/ividiyo abaya kuba nokufikelela kushicilelo. Ngokuxhomekeke kwimvume, iziphumo zinokusetyenziswa ngumphandi (Siphuxolo Bikwe) ukwazisa uphando lwexesha elizayo.)*

This project is under the supervision of Prof. Megan Campbell and Nqobile Msomi in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University. Prof. Megan Campbell is a registered counselling psychologist with extensive training in couples' therapy. Ms. Nqobile Msomi is also a registered counselling psychologist whose area of interest include (Critical) African Psychology)

*(Le Projekthi iphantsi kwelisp likaProf Megan Campbell kunye noNqobile Msomi kwiSebe lePsychologu kwiYunivesithi yaseRhodes. uNjing. Megan Campbell yi-psychologist yengcebiso ebhalisiweyo kunye noqeqesho olubanzi kunyango lwesibini. UNkskz Nqobile Msomi ukwayingcali yengqondo ebhalisiweyo enomdla kokuquka (Critical) African Psychology)*

If you have any questions, please contact Siphuxolo Bikwe (Researcher) on 0658115470 or [21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za) or Prof Megan Campbell at 046 603 7382 or [m.campbell@ru.ac.za](mailto:m.campbell@ru.ac.za) and Ms. Nqobile Msomi on 0466037417 or [n.msomi@ru.ac.za](mailto:n.msomi@ru.ac.za). For any additional ethical information relating to this study or if you wish to report any information about this study, please contact the Research Ethics Coordinator Ms. Danielle de Vos ([d.devos@ru.ac.za](mailto:d.devos@ru.ac.za)).

*(Ukuba unombuzo, nceda uqhagamishelane noSiphuxolo Bikwe (Umphandi) ku-065 811 5479 okanye [21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:21b1941@campus.ru.ac.za) okanye uNjing. Megan Campbell kule nombolo 046 603 7382 okanye [m.campbell@ru.ac.za](mailto:m.campbell@ru.ac.za) kunye noNkskz Nqobile Msomi kule nombolo 046 603 7417. Ulwazi lweenqobo ezisesikweni olunxulumene noluphando okanye ukuba unqwenela ukunika ingxelo ngalo naluphi na ulwazi malunga nolu phando, nceda uqhagamshelane nomMququzeli weMikhwa yoPhando uNkskz Danielle de Vos ([d.devos@ru.ac.za](mailto:d.devos@ru.ac.za)).*

Kind regards,

*Ngobubele,*

Siphuxolo Bikwe