

**An anti-racist feminist analysis of power:
A case study of a group of African women in an Eastern
Cape township**

by

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Abstract

It is argued that South African feminism in the 1990's risks sabotaging itself as a movement and as a form of social critique because it has (1) not completely eradicated key positivist elements from its ontology and epistemology; (2) inadequately examined a crucial issue in an emancipatory social science, namely power; (3) increasingly opted for relativist and pragmatist perspectives in theorising women's oppression and social transformation. It is further argued that the over-reliance on relativism, standpoint theory and pragmatism is problematic for contemporary feminism. As an alternative, Bhaskar's transformational analysis of power in combination with an anti-racist feminism and social psychology is used to provide a robust framework within which complex social issues may be addressed.

In this study, 16 female participants were interviewed about their experiences of living in an impoverished township. Themes identified in the data suggested that the theoretical perspectives used in the study provided insights into the subtleties and complexities of the operation of power in society. These insights enabled productive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of development initiatives and political decision-making processes in the community, and the survival strategies of its women.

It is hoped that research work of this sort could make a real contribution to the ongoing women's emancipation struggle in Port Alfred and similar communities.

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Introduction

“Feminism” has almost always received negative coverage in the mainstream media. 1995 has been a particularly notable year for bad press for feminism and the women’s movement with the spectacle of the often divisive United Nations Women’s Conference in Beijing and the commercialisation of Women’s Day as a retreaded “mother’s day”. Most of the bad publicity simply impresses upon one the extent of the backlash against the feminist women’s movement in our society (see Faludi, 1992). There is also, among the wash of ill-informed, and often misogynistic ranting against feminism, some real evidence that all is not well with feminism, and that some of the ammunition being used by the backlash is being created by feminists themselves.

One such example, covering a host of particulars, is an article which appeared in the *Mail and Guardian* earlier this year (May 26-June 1, 1995) which, despite its sensationalist elements, is a chilling indictment of the state of contemporary feminism. Feminism in the 1990’s, wrote Nicci Gerrard, is an unhappy family tearing itself to bits. Gerrard cites several examples of the vitriolic attacks against certain feminists by their feminist colleagues ironically using the very artillery (references to dress, weight, sexual “availability” and orientation, capacity to enjoy intercourse etc.) which they so abhor from the misogynistic sectors of society. Although Gerrard’s article focused mostly on the well-publicised sparring and mud-slinging between, among others, Greer, Paglia and Burchill, her message was that feminists in the 1990’s are divided on several issues, and many of them are very angry at the movement’s apparent failure to deal with contemporary problems.

The same division and anger besets many South African feminists too. It is the strife within feminism which informs the starting point of this research, exploration and documentation of and about the lives of 16 women living in an impoverished township on the coast of the Eastern Cape.

Three key issues have shaped the production and formulation of this study. The issues can conveniently be marked by classifying the present work as a contribution to “psychology”, which is also motivated by “feminist” concerns and which is methodologically and philosophically “critical realist”. Some attention needs to be paid to each of these before a comprehensive report on the study can begin in earnest.

To label a study “psychological” appears to be an apparently unproblematic activity indicating that it is a study conducted within the confines of the discipline of psychology. But the very definition of what is psychology and by default what is psychological as the reader may be well aware is still aggressively contested. In what follows a few key aspects of the conception of psychology which animates this work are outlined. These remarks are not in any way intended to disqualify any approach to psychology which is not discussed, only to assert the legitimacy of the present approach.

The closest formal perspective which this study’s definition of the “psychological” can offer is that of contemporary South African social identity theorist Catherine Campbell (see 1989, 1992, 1994). Psychological research is seen as focused on and explicitly concerned with the influence and effects of the social group and social institutions on the individual members of society. This positions the focus of social psychology not on interactionist models of person and society but on a transformational model.

A transformational perspective of the science of psychology is one which rejects both the individualism in much of psychology and the social determinism in much of sociology because it recognises that there is “an ontological hiatus between people and society” (Bhaskar,1989a,37). This ontological hiatus makes it impossible to identify the psychological with, reduce it to, reconstruct it from or explain it in terms of the social, or vice-versa. Society neither exists independently of human activity nor is it merely the product of human activity (Bhaskar,1989a).

Rather it is both the product of human activity, and also an essential condition for much of that activity.

Psychology then can be conceived of as a science of mind - not of behaviour as positivist psychology would have one believe (Bhaskar,1989a). As a science of mind, psychology is itself stratified (hence the appropriateness of the diversity of sub-disciplines) and circumscribed by, inter alia, sociology and biology. To identify the focus of the discipline as "mind" is to invite the stratification of the discipline's central concept (of mind) into 2 aspects which according to Bhaskar includes "a depth stratification of beliefs [defining] a psyche and a vertical integration of purposes [defining] a project...The articulation of a psyche defines a person and the hierarchy of projects [defines] a life" (Bhaskar,1989a,112).

"Psychology" then designates the study of a person and her life as she and it are located within the specificity of history. This stresses that what is psychological then can be understood neither from a positivist perspective which states that the object of study can simply be read straight off the empirical world nor from a hermeneutic perspective which states that it can be reconstructed from our subjective experiences (Bhaskar,1989).

Having addressed what is meant by the psychological, then, it is necessary to turn to examining what is meant by "feminist" in the description of this thesis. Like "psychological", the term "feminist" too requires elucidation so that the objectives and merits of the arguments of this study can be properly appreciated.

In her 1991 preface to the second edition of *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, Cheryl Walker (citing Rosemary Tong) claims that "feminist theory is not one, but many, theories or perspectives and ... each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for liberation" (Walker,1991,xxiii). In simple terms, a feminist "in general" is someone who perceives that women in a given society are oppressed as women, and believes that this should be changed. This definition is deliberately broad, and does not presuppose answers to the

questions as to why women should be oppressed, nor even how they are oppressed, let alone what sorts of action are possible or appropriate. Walker (1991) claims that this generality provides makes it possible for different types of theoretical traditions to exist under the broad rubric of feminism (hence the fallaciousness, for example, of arguing that feminism necessarily equals “bourgeois” feminism).

In this thesis Walker’s definition of feminism, and by implication of what is feminist, is accepted. This underscores the essentially political and politicised nature of feminism. Following Edward Said’s (1995) discussion of political knowledge and intellectual labour, work identified by the terms “political” and “politicised” indicates work, scholarship or research which is consciously concerned with issues of policy, politics, power which has an ideology woven directly into its academic material and context and is therefore taken for granted as political. This kind of politicised commitment to social and ideological issues argues Walker (1991) gives academic feminism its intensity and topicality.

Turning to the question of feminist research, it is necessary to define at the outset what could be meant by feminist theory, and the related epistemological issues which inform the theoretical framework and methodological strategies adopted in this study.

Feminism is not a single theory of society, nor is it even a single theory of gender relations. Like anti-racism it cannot constitute a theory of society on its own since recognition of a problem does not directly entail a theory of how to understand the problem or how to remove it. Rather feminism must rely to some extent on the insights of other models and theories if a critically informed and appropriate strategy for ending women’s oppression in society is to be possible. The many diverse “types” of feminism could be seen as the results of combining the general feminist awareness discussed above with specific social theories such as liberalism, socialism and pragmatism.

The same is true of feminist methodology. Walker (1991) points out that no single generally accepted feminist methodology exists. Indeed much of what has been put forward as distinctly feminist in research has been used elsewhere by social scientists who were neither feminists nor even interested in feminist issues, yet who did try to combat a combination of, *inter alia*, the following aspects of positivist research: (a) the hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched, (b) the imagined superiority of quantitative over qualitative methodologies, and (c) the prohibition against probing of the ordinary, the social and even the personal.

What appears, then, to make some research “feminist,” suggests Walker, “lies rather in the types of questions one is asking, the concern with the political project [of women’s emancipation], as well as careful attention to gender stratification and the sexual division of labour in one’s analysis of social relations and hierarchies” (1991, xxiii). Feminist analysis in this thesis is understood as analysis which uses gender as the major category of social investigation, but which does not assert that other social categories such as race or class are irrelevant or even necessarily less important (see Walker, 1991). Gender problems, after all, call for gender-sensitive study in the same way that numerical problems necessitate mathematical study. It will be argued in chapter 1 and 2 of this thesis that attempted quantification of types and degrees of oppression is counterproductive to developing appropriate strategies for emancipation and wastes valuable time, energy and intellectual resources.

Awareness of the need to prevent the waste of resources motivates many of the theoretical and practical aspects of the research documented in this thesis. This concern with resources such as time, energy and intellect is not incidental but deliberate, and relates to the need for a sense of urgency and commitment to exist in (not exclusively) women’s organisations involved in a transforming South African context. As South Africa moves towards developing spaces and institutions in which issues of gender, race, sexuality etc. can be explored with the

purpose of changing and challenging discrimination and prejudice there is a need to "exploit" to the full the opportunities presented.

In this thesis, there exists a sense of urgency directed at contributing to this process. The climate of readiness appears increasingly in danger of being ignored by South African feminists who in significant numbers are adopting either easy universalistic perspectives or strict relativist positions which threaten feminist scholarship and mobilisation with fragmentation. This issue is dealt with in greater detail in chapter 1 and is therefore only briefly mentioned here. In the former instance, Walker (1991) warns against developing a sloppy, ethnocentric assumption of global sisterhood and uncritically assuming the universality of western patriarchy. Much of the interesting contemporary feminist work and criticism, she claims, has come from black feminists and nationalists, who have shown the limitations of these assumptions and the need for the existence of women's subordination (as well as the forms it takes) to be established and specifically understood in each case. In the latter instance, it is argued in this thesis that promotion of diversity should not degenerate into a promotion of difference. Further, this thesis argues that the existence of diversity between women in South African society is not sufficient reason for the adoption of relativist standpoint theory, or similar perspectives. It is argued that these relativist moves, like the easy universalism criticised by Walker, are evidence of what she calls "intellectual sloppiness" and hence of wasted time, energy and intellectual resources.

These critical claims are partly licensed by the stated commitment to the Tong-Walker definition of "feminism" and "feminist," which provides a clear set of categories with which to examine the state of contemporary South African feminism. It will be recalled that the definition stresses that feminism is politicised, engaged with the wider society as a whole, and dedicated to changing the social order of a society in which women are subordinate.

Of major importance for the argument of this thesis is that this definition highlights the critical focus of feminist politics and theory on reality, physical and societal.

Feminism as a movement has very clear goals which include challenging and appropriately changing the oppression of women. The relationship of feminist scholarship to this is central. Academic feminists produce knowledge and understanding which provides deeper insights into the workings of their societies and the mechanisms which operate to oppress women. This knowledge can be used when formulating strategies for removing the oppression. The definition also underpins the "openness" in feminism or the sense that feminism is engaged at all levels with various challenges and criticisms in the process of achieving a deeper understanding and knowledge of society.

Clarity about the goals and activities of the feminist project is vital for feminism as a valid social critique and as a political movement. This is especially true for the South African context where, as Walker states, the development of a feminist theory and methodology appropriate to understanding the complexity of the social order (which is only now being seriously discussed) translates into a matter of survival. In this thesis, this point is stressed again and again in various forms and informs the theoretical framework adopted in the research.

This introduction must now turn to the final element used in the initial description of this thesis: "critical realist". Critical realism is, as Bhaskar states, a "mongrel" term based on a popular collapsing of his terms of transcendental realism (a philosophy of science) and critical naturalism (a special but related philosophy of the human sciences) (see Bhaskar, 1989b, 190). Critical realism is "a coherent account of the nature of nature, society, science, human agency and philosophy...[whose] intent is to underlabour for science, conceived of as a necessary but insufficient agency of [and for] human emancipation" (Bhaskar, 1989b, 191).

As a social product this thesis may be seen as concerned with exploring the psychological aspects of the lives of 16 women from an impoverished township from within a perspective which acknowledges the importance of gender as a tool of social analysis and attempting to contribute to presenting a coherent account of

this context and to the emancipation of women in that context. Briefly then the present work attempts this in the following way:

Chapter one of the thesis opens with the observation that a significant amount of South African feminist scholarship is relativist and the proposal that this is a point of urgent concern. It is argued that the rise in popularity of judgemental relativist perspectives is symptomatic of a deeper problem within feminism, namely that there is a legacy of a significant amount of uncritical philosophical reflection about positivism as a methodology, and its associated epistemology and ontology. Some attention is paid to these issues before the chapter turns to focus on how feminism typically rejects positivism correctly but inefficiently, and how this inefficiency has blunted the effectiveness of feminist theory and politics. The swing towards relativism and postmodernism in much contemporary feminism is argued to be a result of the inadequate exorcism of positivism from feminist theorising. The concern with relativism and postmodernism which is based on an idealist philosophy of science is argued to be inherently problematic when it comes to the problem of theorising and mobilising around South African societal realities. Chapter one ends with recommendations that in light of the dangers of positivism and inadequacies of idealism, adopting a critical realist philosophy of science is the most appropriate step towards refocusing the wavering feminist politics and theory in South Africa.

Chapter two examines in closer detail some of the claims made in the first chapter. The chapter begins with considering positivism's past and current impact on feminist research and theorising. The core area in which this impact is most evident is in feminism's rather surprising lack of theorising about the issue of power. Referring to and building on Ramazanoglu's (1989) argument attention is paid to mainstream feminist work on power. The focus then is shifted to black feminism's more overt concern with the power issue. The chapter critically discusses the merits of this analysis of power, and what positive insights it can provide for contemporary feminist research in South Africa. Concern is however expressed about certain philosophical contradictions and underdevelopment in

black feminism. Insights from critical realist philosopher Roy Bhaskar's works provide vital pointers for developing an appropriate focus in feminist scholarship on power and the chapter ends with support expressed for anti-racist feminist rather than black feminist thought in light of the South African context.

Chapter three opens with the recognition (increasingly documented in the literature) that black women's lives are often inappropriately represented in mainstream feminist or other literature because of the lack of focus on the issue of how power relations at both macro and micro-levels in society operate. Micro-, and macro-, power relations and dynamics are explored in this chapter, and special reference is made to the continuing influence of the pre-industrial world view, political power dynamics and economic determinants and their resulting psychological manifestations. The aims of the study are then discussed before the thesis examines the methodological issues implicit in this research.

Chapter four attends to the methodological aspects of this study and opens with a consideration of some of the features of feminist qualitative research. The chapter explores the merits of the study's specific use of the case study method and addresses key issues of sampling, participants, data collection and data analysis. It is argued that a concern with these issues - but not exclusive focus on them - is a symptom of methodological soundness rather than evidence of a lapse into positivism as much sloppy feminist research would have one believe.

Chapter five of presents the data from the semi-structured interviews with the 16 participants. Chapter six then critically discusses the socio-demographic and thematic data in light of the literature and arguments explored earlier in this thesis. Some conclusions are drawn and a preliminary evaluation of this study is offered.

Chapter 1:

Towards a critical feminism

Overview

In this chapter it is argued that the legacy of much uncritical philosophical reflection about positivism by feminism blunts the effectiveness of its theory and politics. It is further argued that much of contemporary feminism's concern with relativism and postmodernism is based on an idealist philosophy of science which is inherently problematic in general, and particularly in the face of South African social realities. It is proposed that a critical realist philosophy of science can (a) refocus feminism as political movement and theory in general, and (b) suggest steps in the development of a methodology appropriate to the South African context.

1. Preliminary observations

The media coverage of the recent United Nations women's conference in Beijing achieved a single significant feat that feminists alone have been unable to achieve: By paying such close attention to the sensational, the conference took contemporary feminist debates out of the scholarly (and sometimes not so scholarly) journals, books, and seminar rooms and catapulted them right into popular global consciousness. Splashed across international newspapers, t.v., radio and computer screens were daily reports of the bickering, labelling, and infighting between the "haves" and the "have-nots", the "straights" and the "lesbians", the "lesbians" and the "religious fundamentalists", and so on. What the conference achieved was to show the world, and the media eagerly waiting for scraps with which to feed the anti-feminist backlash, that contemporary feminism is dominated by debates between feminists themselves, rather than between feminists and their common foes. The only differences between the conference and the scholarly journals was that this time, the "debates" were labelled for what they were - "fights" - and the substance of these fights was stripped of its jargon to reveal that serious divisions exist within the contemporary women's movements.

As mentioned above the concern with differences and divisions, real and potential, pervades both scholarly and not-so-scholarly academic journals and books. The journal *Agenda*, for example, which it is fair to say emphasises popularity and accessibility of intellectual rigour and sophistication, regularly features articles on the "difference versus similarity" debate in South African feminism, sometimes dedicating an entire edition to the subject. The *Agenda* example is telling, since it reflects the tone and mood of discussions within university women's studies programmes and within many women's organisations in South Africa. The content of specific lines of argument in the debate will be addressed directly after this, but in terms of tone and mood contributions range between desperate pleas for a single, united feminism to angry separatist threats.

This thesis is concerned to join the debate, and to tackle questions of difference, similarity, and how best to address the issues facing women in South Africa. Indeed the debate forms an implicit focus of this thesis. It is not possible to address every point raised in the debate but some attempt has been made to examine the following issues: (i) what are the differences and/or similarities between women's experiences, needs, etc. In South Africa; (ii) what are the implications of the differential categorisation of for example "black", "lesbian", "Muslim" among others for feminism and emancipation; and (iii) what is the role/s of academic feminism and feminists in these debates.

It is explicitly assumed then that there exists within contemporary feminism in South Africa the presence of very important issues (addressed throughout this thesis) which are at their core, complex, challenging and if inappropriately addressed potentially destructive to feminist theorising and politics. It is also noted with concern that these issues increasingly appear to be addressed through the use of philosophically and politically questionable frameworks by many feminists and women activists in South Africa who seem to have temporarily suspended their own abilities to think critically.

This thesis precedes from the observation that the existence of critical, complex issues within feminist theory and politics in South Africa is itself a vital and necessary condition for the development of a critical feminist struggle but that the responses to this tend to exhibit in increasing numbers an over-reliance on extreme relativism and standpoint theory. The latter appears to be necessary for those who wish to avoid at all costs banishment from the ranks of the "politically correct" in-group. These politically correct "groupies" do not and cannot question the underlying assumptions of their claims as the frameworks within in which they are located (this issue will be discussed in the following section of this chapter) denies and inhibits critical thinking.

These relativist frameworks, as will be shown below, facilitate the fragmentation of feminism as political movement and the stagnation of feminism as social critique, thus serving effectively to blunt feminism's power and value. The following

sections of this thesis examine firstly what it is that feminist scholarship seeks to rectify and change, what is being opted for, and then moves on to examining the philosophical and political pitfalls inherent in this option.

2. Uncritical thinking - from positivism to postmodernism

Feminist theorising has been primarily concerned with understanding and sometimes attempting to transform the oppression of women in society. Much has been made of feminism's epistemological and methodological differences from mainstream, western academia. In this section, attention is paid to what has been identified as "problematic" within mainstream academia - namely positivism. The focus then narrows onto what feminism's response to this has been, and it is argued that this response itself has problematic elements that are directly related to the current divisions and shortcomings of contemporary feminist research and theorising.

Quite simply then what is being attempted in this chapter is a review of the "basics" or that which is fundamental, unavoidable, determinant in knowledge creation. Often the process itself is intellectually and politically traumatic because many of the underlying, often hidden, assumptions evident in one's claims about social science, society, emancipation run counter to what it is that one wishes to achieve.

The value of the process of reviewing what are the basics, the fundamentals, the determinant aspects of one's models or research paradigms cannot be underestimated. To gloss over this process is to contribute to the waste of intellectual and political resources in a context which cannot afford it.

In a manner reminiscent of confession, there is something cathartic in recognising and admitting that feminism never exclusively captured the market on bashing and overthrowing the positivists - an admission which locates rather than deflates feminist contributions to a rich intellectual history of seeking true knowledge about society and how it operates. Critical discussions of positivist science in fact have

never been the exclusive domain of twentieth century academics. Mid-nineteenth century German philosopher of history and early hermeneutics thinker, J.G. Droysen, for example, attacked what he saw as the spread of "crass positivism" from France and Britain to Germany (Outhwaite,1987). Like many after him, Droysen was concerned about the effects "crass positivism" would have on the social and human sciences; concerns which proved well-founded as a significant portion of twentieth century intellectual history will attest.

Positivism's over-concern with law-explanation orthodoxy had (and still has) a profound influence on the social sciences, and for the purposes of this thesis, on psychology in particular. Positivism demanded that all science be devoted to the pursuit of what were essentially reductionist explanations and the development of general laws (Outhwaite, 1987). Explaining an event or phenomenon involved relating it to a general law, which in turn was universally generalisable. In practice, positivist science identified explanation with deducibility from covering laws - the positivist rule of thumb was "no law, no explanation" (Outhwaite,1987). The implication for the social sciences was devastating since reasons and motivations have always resisted capture in nomological form, and people and societies have proved endlessly capable of defeating the predictions which are the hallmark of positivist natural science and the paradigm of its alleged success. They could not perform under such conditions and consequently became riddled with problems, inconsistencies, insecurities and politico-philosophical dangers. Attempts by positivists to resolve the problem of explanation in the social sciences states Outhwaite (1987) have ranged from the fantastical to the irrelevant to the obscure.

Interestingly it was not the difficulties of experiment, measurement or ideological influence but the problems of (social scientific) explanation which inhibited attempts to beat the social sciences into a shape acceptable to a positivist philosophy of science (Outhwaite, 1987). This inability of the social sciences to satisfy the law-explanation orthodoxy dominated much of twentieth century positivist consciousness. It is ironic then that this issue did not lead directly to a

rejection of positivism by the social sciences. Some more than others attempted to conform - social psychology more than sociology, sociology more than history (Outhwaite, 1987). This, argued Mokrzycki, was the product of a milieu almost completely lacking contact with and failing to fit social scientific research practice (cited in Outhwaite,1987). And, rather bitinglly, Mokrzycki adds that attempts to conform were evidence of the inferior status the social sciences bestowed upon themselves (cited in Outhwaite,1987).

Although the social sciences were ridiculed for their implicit inferiority, significantly these "underdeveloped" positivist disciplines remained loyal to positivism and the positivist myth. This loyalty can be directly linked to the issue of ontology and its "absence" and "uselessness" for positivist science (Outhwaite, 1987; Collier, 1994). Within the positivist paradigm, ontological issues (issues about what exists) were resolved into either the postulates of a theory or meaningless metaphysical concerns (Outhwaite,1987). For the social sciences then questions about the nature of the social could be treated as arbitrary definitional postulates which did not require further attention thus effectively side-stepping the central problems of social scientific concept formation (Outhwaite,1987). The problem of social scientific concept formation was a key issue in the demise of positivist philosophies of science and the rise of alternative ones such as critical theory, hermeneutics, realism in the latter half of the twentieth century (Outhwaite,1987).

Attending to and considering what are/were the foundations of knowledge was a self-destruct mechanism at the heart of empiricism. Empiricism's hidden ontology postulates that (i) experience is the foundation of knowledge, and (ii) its conceptions of theory as no more than the interpretation of a logical (mathematical) system (Outhwaite,1987). These 2 postulates formed an unstable duo upon which the bulk of positivist claims relied (Outhwaite, 1987, 19). Without awareness of this, the social sciences swallowed the positivist dogma concerning the natural sciences' alleged superiority of method - in fact, it has been successfully illustrated that the social sciences have grossly misunderstood what

the natural sciences are about (Bhaskar,1986) - and proceeded to imitate this "ideal" in the hope of achieving suitable impressiveness.

This gross misunderstanding of the natural sciences and positivism still exists in some of the key contemporary feminist writings about positivism and many of the easy alternatives offered to it. The point about this misunderstanding cannot be stressed enough as it underpins and validates the swing towards certain theoretical frameworks which remain improperly unpacked. The problems of not addressing this become quite clear as one traces the (il)logic of the arguments presented in, for example, the work of standpoint theorist and feminist Sandra Harding (1987). Some attention will be paid to these claims (often made with specific reference to psychology) as they inform the argument of this thesis that feminism has misunderstood positivism and as a result inadequately exorcised it.

Harding begins her argument with the statement that as a discipline psychology has mimicked the respectable, prestigious and "hard" disciplines of the natural, biological and mathematical sciences (1987). This mimicry she argues results in a hierarchical psychological science in which respectability is issued to that which most favourably compares with the working practice of the natural sciences. Those psychologies argues Harding (1987) which attain this respectability and credibility incorporate three key assumptions of the traditional philosophy of science: (i) that the origins of scientific research are irrelevant to the credibility of the results of the research, (ii) that the selection or choice of a topic or area of investigation is random and does not follow any logical pattern, and (iii) that the sole arena in which to justify one's research topic is in the process of testing an empirical hypothesis and not through critical debate about ethics.

What is wrong with psychology states Harding (1987) is its underlying philosophy of science consisting of the above three points. To identify these points as that which is wrong with psychology is to assume that if corrected these symptoms will result in the improvement of psychological science. It is so that the above points are true of the worst of positivist psychological research but it is not correct to claim that they constitute a positivist philosophy of psychological science. The

above issues arise because of, but do not alone constitute, the underlying philosophy of positivist science to which much of psychology adheres.

There is an intellectual danger in this kind of thinking as it gives rise to claims that science (knowledge) is itself the problem and is itself evidence of misogyny. In many feminist writings for example it is argued that *"[the] exclusion of women is an active process rather than...a result of passive neglect...women are structurally excluded from the realm of discourse, or for the sake of theoretical preoccupations and coherency, simply dropped"* (Thiele, 1992, 27). Science is often identified as a masculine phenomenon and the male bias simple by-product of what is masculine - hence the "need" to reject science and its alleged inherent male bias (viewed erroneously as the core of the problem). Science is argued to be linked to institutionalised elitist political thought which silences the "voices" of the non-elite (blacks, Orientals, women, homosexuals etc.) because the former wield institutional sanction powers to discredit the "truth" of the non-elite perspective. The confusion in this type of argument seems to be with casting science as the enemy rather than positivism. Yes, positivist science has lent itself to an inherently male and elite bias which has pervaded a lot of psychological research. But there is a danger in conflating male bias and positivism with science in general. For example, stressing that there is a need for concern with matters theoretical has been perceived in some feminist quarters as promoting or disguising the male bias in science. *"[R]adical feminists have sometimes alleged that objectivity is just male subjectivity...In...these cases claims for objectivity are decried as arrogant, whereas disavowal of it is billed as open-minded"* (Collier, 1994, 13)

Feminism, like any other critical perspective, requires continuous clarity about what it is that it is arguing and why. It has been appropriately stated by for example Harding (1987) that feminism challenges what is in need of scientific explanation and the dominant perspective scientific explanation adopted. There also exists, states Harding (1987), a need for clarity about technical issues in feminist theorising. Positivist research and some feminist research she states is

guilty of intertwining and confusing epistemology with methodology and method (Harding, 1987). Clarifying these issues argues Harding (1987) provides feminist enquiry with its true power because traditional (read positivist) science demands that all knowledge claims be defended or defeated in the arena of method while feminism with its deeper understanding of knowledge rises above this. Feminist epistemology then is defined by Harding as that which constructs for feminists a goal of inquiry providing women with explanations of social problems that they need (1987). This feminist epistemology is seen as providing an appropriate methodology which can overcome all that is wrong with traditional research methodology namely the distance between "researcher" and "researched"; the lack of emotional involvement by the researcher; the denial of the merits of ethical debate in research; and the requirement that the merits of a claim be ascertained at conferences or in journals (see Harding, 1987; Collins, 1989a; Weed, 1989).

The swing away from concerns with method has been argued by many feminists to have led to and been accomplished by taking stock of the material circumstances of women in society. Meyer for example states that the concern with the material context is a powerful measure for assessing knowledge claims, providing a firm basis upon which the actions and interpretations of social phenomena can be imposed, and against which the limited generalizability of results can be checked (1988). Meyer further states that feminism's legitimisation of the primacy of subjective experiences in research is an appropriate forum in which theoretical perspectives can be tried on for size (1988).

On the surface there appears to be an acceptably coherent argument presented in this type of feminist discussion of "mainstream" academia. In fact, many feminist scholars would have one erroneously believe (and do believe that) feminism itself was responsible for the demise and identification of all that was wrong with positivism. None of the features of feminist epistemology or methodology are unique to feminist research: "much of what has been put forward as distinctly feminist in research methodology has in fact been used by social scientists and historians who are not specifically feminist" (Walker, 1991, xxiii). Following

Walker, then, it appears that feminist research can only benefit from being honest about what tools and insights it has drawn on and from who rather than being selectively imperialistic.

Returning to Harding and Meyer, then, their respective comments about feminist epistemology providing feminists with a powerful return-of-serve to (supposed) positivist scientism are somewhat fraudulent. The merits of feminist claims can only be tested in an arena where they are expected to present their value against other theoretical perspectives, not in an arena which feminists have constructed in which the only two players are feminists and positivists. Arguments of this sort, more than anything else, signal an insecurity and structural weakness that many feminists have within and for their own claims. To claim that some view is a correct interpretation of social reality because it represents the perspectives of the dominated (that is offers a "woman-centric perspectives") is incorrect. Such a view presupposes an unjustified appeal to oppression as quantifiable and epistemologically useful as such. As an argument it lends itself to the construction of judgemental relativism in which all perspectives are viewed as valid in and of themselves.

It appears very difficult to deny that a possibility exists that anyone, including the oppressed can be wrong about social worlds, social relations, and social phenomena including themselves. Failure to acknowledge this is tantamount to denying that our social production of knowledge is open to correction (Bhaskar,1989a) and provides carte blanche to feminists promoting a judgmental relativist line within which it is possible to argue that one's own knowledge claims are always correct.

Much of contemporary feminism then continues to slip into the discourse of the judgemental relativists. Recall that judgemental relativism is a term coined by Bhaskar (1989) to refer to the position which holds that all perspectives are equally valid, and that no external criticism is possible or acceptable. Judgmental relativists sometimes go further and contend that it is a point of violence to impose standards of truth, falsity and reality on different "texts" (see Norris,1992). It is the

argument of this chapter that judgemental relativism can only ever blunt feminist explanations of social reality. For this purpose, it is necessary to explore the work of Christopher Norris in more detail. In *Uncritical theory*, Norris (1992) provides a well argued case against not only post-modernism and its offspring but against what is implicit in this form of scholarship. Illustrating his argument with the example of the Gulf War and numerous intellectual responses to it, Norris (1992) highlights some very real dangers inherent in post-structuralist, textualist and standpoint theories. He provides a thorough-going critique of the whole line of thought which discovers its inaugural moment in Saussure and runs down to present-day post-structuralist, postmodernist, neo-pragmatist or textualist fashion all of which share an uncritical acceptance of Saussure's basic precepts.

Post-structuralism argues Norris (1992) takes a series of working hypotheses first developed by Ferdinand de Saussure in the specialised context of structural linguistics, and erects them into a wholesale methodology for the human sciences. This has marked metaphysical (anti-realist) overtones. Saussure called for the exclusion or provisional suspension of the referential aspects of language only in the context of structural linguistics. Followers of Saussure have however inverted his entire methodological position and argues Norris have taken his contextually-specific call for referential suspension and developed it into a full-scale theoretical assault on reference, truth and that mythical bogey, the 'classical realist text' (Norris, 1992).

The turn towards post-structuralist, postmodernist and neo-pragmatist doctrines of discourse and representation, claims Norris (1992), lends support to prevailing (consensus) notions of reality and truth by making it strictly unthinkable that anyone could offer good arguments - or factual counter-evidence - against the elective self-images of the age, or ideas of what is (currently and contingently) "good in the way of belief". These developments in intellectualism lead directly to extreme anti-realist thinking and similar to Norris' example (1992) potentially render academic criticism totally powerless to challenge the dominant mass-media treatment of a "simulated" event like the Gulf War. Norris has in mind the

particular example of Jean Baudrillard, who before the Gulf war suggested that there would be no real war, and afterwards contended that there hadn't been one, only a "hyperreal" media event or "simulacrum" of a war. This has a serious implication for academic intellectualism:

"it is a sad reflection on the currency of "advanced" intellectual debate in the human sciences that so much of what passes for radical theory is in fact quite incapable of mustering resistance to a downright conformist or consensus-based account of knowledge, truth and reality." (Norris, 1992,126)

Post-structuralism has promoted the idea in and to contemporary academia that "reality" is purely a discursive phenomenon and a product of the various codes, conventions, language games or signifying systems which provide the only means of interpreting experience of some given socio-cultural perspective (see Collier, 1994; Norris, 1992; Bhaskar, 1989b). It cheerfully pronounced an end to the regime of reality, truth and enlightenment critique and its postmodern assumption (its textual premise) allowed one to conclude that reality just is whatever we make of it according to this or that predominant language-game, discourse or mode of signifying practice (see Norris, 1992; Collier, 1994). (Reject that premise and the whole line of argument simply collapses).

Should anyone feel that neo-pragmatism is being caricatured here, and that no respected intellectual could possibly think along the lines suggested, it is worth pointing out that Richard Rorty has gone so far as to state that on a pragmatist view: ..."the enslavement of one human tribe or race by another, or of the human females by the human males, is not an intrinsic evil." (in Goodman 1995, 128). It is clear enough at once that feminists should be suspicious of a conception which allows so little critical power. In a note to the same article Rorty asserts that pragmatism would be as useful to "fascists like Mussolini ... as it is to liberals like Dewey." (In Goodman 1995, 144).

The relativist aspects of postmodernist thinking and in particular the ultra-relativist elements such as Richard Rorty and the neo-pragmatists, omit in their analyses of

society and social phenomena any grounds for deciding between good and bad arguments, truths and untruths, reasons for adopting some particular position as opposed to others (Norris, 1992; Collier, 1994; Bhaskar, 1989b). What concerns Norris (1992) in *Uncritical Theory* is the inability of contemporary intellectuals (in what passes for much of critical theory) to make a principled oppositional stand on issues of local or world politics. Citing at some length from Norris illustrates this point exactly:

“[Each] litigant should tell his or her own story without the intrusion of some “higher” (meta-narrative) voice of authority and truth that treat them as mere unreliable narrators subject to correction from outside and above. Apply this to the Gulf War and the message is plain enough: that we should take all various language games on board - from Bush’s moral-crusading rhetoric to the UN resolutions, military briefings, Pentagon scenarios, media campaigns, anti-war protests, investigative news-reports, historical and political analyses etc. - and treat them as in principle belonging to different (heterogeneous) genres of discourse, to judge any one of which according to the operative standards, values or truth-conditions of another would constitute a violent suppression of the different and hence an unjust proceeding. For all its appearance of fine even-handedness this doctrine amounts to nothing more than a posture of moral and political indifference, a refusal to weigh the rights and wrongs of the case by attempting to separate truth from falsehood, or the pseudo-truths of consensus belief from the factual details that can yet be established through critical sifting of the available (albeit partial and fragmentary) evidence.” (Norris, 1992,87).

In brief what Norris provides for this thesis is a discussion of the effects and implications of adopting a postmodernist - whether it be post-structuralist, textualist, standpoint or neo-pragmatist - perspective. He stresses that the resultant intellectual inertia and stagnation which accompanies this and the inherent political conservatism act as bulwarks against social and political activism (Norris, 1992).

Andrew Collier (1994) too has dedicated some energy towards unpacking the myth of “critical” thinking of the postmodernist scholarship. Collier (in his introduction to the philosophy of Roy Bhaskar) states that it is idealism which is the underlying feature of postmodernist thinking that is hugely problematic for theorising about social reality (1994). Following Bhaskar, Collier states that idealism - which for present purposes includes post-structuralism, neo-pragmatism, standpoint theory - is guilty of allowing one to criticise a scientific theory for being, for example, politically nasty or aesthetically unappealing (1994). Here idealism is the ontological position which states that reality is nothing more than a product of consciousness and therefore involves a denial of the autonomous existence of matter. Idealism subordinates theoretical criteria to practical ones in assessing theories. Collier calls this feature the “primacy of practice” and he claims it prevents the identifying of false or contradictory beliefs on which a practice may rest because they are reduced to attitudes about something (1994). It is clearly evident that there are links between his claims (1994) and those of Norris (1992) namely that idealist assumptions promote and sustain false perceptions of an immunity from rational argument.

Many of the postmodernist intellectual “isms” like post-structuralism, neo-pragmatism and textualism assume that it is necessary to redescribe the world, one another and oneself in the attempt to obtain a deeper understanding of society and develop appropriate strategies for, where possible, changing this (Collier, 1994). Idealists, for example, argue that true freedom can come from redescription. Collier illustrates this with a controversial example of homosexuality, oppression and labelling. Homosexual men in keeping with this “redescription-psychological” activism of the last 20 years, have chose to call themselves “gays” rather than accept the dominant homophobic term “queers” and assume that the action of self-redescription is one of empowered self-creation. But asks Collier to what extent will this self-description be accepted by others? The question remains: will self-redescription itself prevent the phenomenon of gay-bashing? Gay-bashing is still queer-bashing, irrespective of its terminology, and the homophobia continues unchecked. Over-simplifying oppression and

emancipation, therefore, is potentially dangerous. No matter how important a part of the emancipation process transforming descriptions and labels is, it is not the entire process by a long shot.

It is of especial concern for this study that these issues be discussed and the question be asked how guilty is feminism of this sort of idealist “redescription-psychological” argument. It is not intended that this cognitive and emotional aspect be ignored but it is vital to realistically ascertain what is and is not an effective strategy because oppression and emancipation are about survival and peoples’ lives, not abstractions. Cheryl Walker’s call “the formulation of a feminist theory and methodology appropriate to South Africa’s highly complex social order” (1991,xxii) as quoted in the introductory section of this thesis stresses that these questions need to be asked with all urgency. Despite the implicit weaknesses of judgemental relativist assumptions in many feminist analysis of social reality, a lot of contemporary feminism blindly adopts this perspective (see for example Terborg-Pern, Harley & Rushing, 1987; Meena,1992; James & Busia, 1993; Ncgongo, 1993). It is not the argument of this thesis that feminism should shun reflexivity rather its is argued that judgemental relativism is unable to create for feminism the necessary reflexivity. Judgemental relativism creates an arena of political correctness and stagnation and in light of the definition of feminism offered in the Introduction, this never was and never should be true of feminism and feminists.

An effective way for South African feminism to deal with much of the white-noise about science, knowledge and emancipation is through critical realism. Critical realism’s philosophical assumptions and political agenda provide South African feminism with renewed vigour and intelligent insights. Having described in the previous section typical critiques of positivism by certain contemporary feminists, the rejection of positivist science and subsequent swing towards idealism and relativism, it is necessary to examine an alternative to positivism, namely critical realism. Critical realist assumptions about knowledge and science and the implications this has for the theory and practice of emancipation can provide for

South African feminism challenging points which will direct it along the path of developing an appropriate theoretical and methodological orientation.

Empiricist philosophies of science, widely considered the methodological ideal to which the social sciences should aspire, were dramatically challenged in the 1970's (Outhwaite, 1987). Previously marginal philosophical positions such as hermeneutics, scientific realism, critical theory were revived within this context of change and challenge. Shaped by general changes in the intellectual climates of western Europe and North America, and by the institutional expansion of the social sciences, a new generation of academics began to emerge (Outhwaite, 1987). At the level of practice, qualitative methods as opposed to quantitative ones were considerably expanded and used in social scientific research. Although significant, this alone did not challenge the dominant empiricist philosophical position. That process was theory-led (Outhwaite, 1987). At the level of theory, the new academics renewed interest in classical social theory reflected their (especially sociologists) belief that the overall character of social theory required re-examination (Outhwaite, 1987). The "return-to-Marx" provided a significant backdrop for the hermeneutic, scientific realist and critical theory challenges to the empiricism and positivism in the social science (Outhwaite, 1987).

Positivism according to philosopher Roy Bhaskar is an example of actualism or the denial of the existence of underlying structures of phenomena and consequent exclusive focus on the level of events (1986, 1989a, 1989b). Actualism's denial of the existence of the unexercised powers of phenomena makes positivism unable to contribute to discussions on transformation of science and society (Bhaskar, 1986). As epistemology, positivism teaches that:

"[P]articular knowledge is of events sensed in perception; general knowledge is of the patterns such events trace in space and over time in which, if it is to be possible must be constant...Sense-perception exhausts the possible objects of knowledge. Conversely any object of sense-perception constitutes a possible object of knowledge. Thus the

cognitive claims of theory, metaphysics, morality, ethics, politics, religion and hermeneutics alike are rejected; and man is located squarely as an object within the system of objects in which he acts" (Bhaskar in Collier, 1994, 103).

What this means is that positivist epistemology is a supposedly free-standing epistemology unsupported by any ontology, sociology or conception of how to arrive at such conclusions (Collier,1994). It is a denial of the social production of knowledge. Its sociology of knowledge is therefore individualistic, mechanistic and behaviourist and its ontology is an empirical realist one (Collier, 1994).

Positivism at its heart is inherently contradictory - it possesses a false epistemology and a contradictory system covering much wider issues. It hides this contradiction by inverting the transitive and intransitive dimensions, or knowledge and being (Collier,1994,103). It tries to project an image of a de-realised reality and a de-socialised science (Collier,1994). The epistemic fallacy functions to construct a world made up only of our sense-perceptions (Collier,1994). And the ontic fallacy leads to the reification of facts and reduces knowledge to its object, effacing its process of production. These features are not just simple errors on the part of positivism but according to Bhaskar an ideology whose errors function in the interest of a particular social system (cited in Collier,1994). The social production of science is hence presented as unquestionable and natural givens and inhibits scientific revolutions and splits science off from its common-sense elements (Collier,1994).

This is where critical realism has the measure of other critiques offered by philosophies such as hermeneutists and critical theorists. Critical realism and realist theory make four important claims about knowledge: (1) objectivity; (2) fallibility; (3) transphenomenality; (4) counter-phenomenality (Bhaskar,1986, Collier,1994, Outhwaite,1987). Objectivity refers to the realness of phenomena whether or not we have knowledge of them (Bhaskar,1986, Collier, 1994,Outhwaite,1987). Fallibility refers to realism's belief that claims are always open to refutation (Bhaskar,1986, Collier,1994, Outhwaite,1987).

Transphenomenality refers to looking beyond the appearances of phenomena to their underlying structures (Bhaskar in Outhwaite,1987). And counter-phenomenality is an assumption that knowledge of the deep structures of phenomena may contradict appearances (Bhaskar,1986, Collier,1994, Outhwaite,1987).

These assumptions about knowledge allow one to see that empiricism with its focus on the empirical world is guilty of epistemic fallacy because it reduces questions about what there is (ontological questions) to questions about what we can know (epistemic questions) (Bhaskar,1986). Realism, unlike empiricism, claims that things can exist and events can occur unperceived by us. Bhaskar defines the epistemic fallacy as "the view that statements about being can be reduced to or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge" (Bhaskar,1978, 36). Bhaskar argues that this fallacy pervades idealist, pragmatist, positivist, post-structuralist and (in a different way) phenomenological philosophies of science (Collier,1994,76).

Critical realism's assumptions about the knower, knowing and the known are of vital importance for this study. Bhaskar emphasises that science is a social activity, a claim satisfactorily popularised by philosophical discussions of science in the 1960's (see Bhaskar 1986). The production of knowledge, states Bhaskar, occurs in the transitive realm which is subject to historical influence and change, and does not exist as an end in itself but only in order to explain what is happening in the intransitive dimension (Bhaskar,1978). The intransitive dimension, or that which is real, is independent of us (Bhaskar,1986). Our knowledge and theories are ours in the sense that they are informative about us but they are also about the world and therefore we are not trapped in the transitive dimension but are always able to change what constitutes it (and do) against the backdrop of the intransitive dimension (Bhaskar,1986).

The transitive dimension allows one to understand that our beliefs are socially produced, transient and fallible which Bhaskar refers to this as epistemic relativism (1986, 1989b). Bhaskar does not claim however that all beliefs are

equally valid. In critical realism, there is no space for judgmental relativism or arguments based on your "preference" for one theory over another (Collier,1994, 90). Where critical realism differs from other philosophies of science (those inherent in post-structuralism or positivism for example) is the assumption that phenomena possess powers and the powers they have are due to their structures (Bhaskar,1986). Collier argues that this concern with generative mechanisms heralds a higher, more advanced level of scientific knowledge - a mechanism is that to which a law refers (Collier,1994, 43). In critical realism a law is true if the mechanism it designates operates unimpeded in a closed system (Bhaskar,1986). A law is useful if it contributes to explaining events in open systems in which that mechanism is operating alongside others because in open systems (such as a community setting or society) a multiplicity of mechanisms operate (Bhaskar,1986).

Bhaskar also states that there are strata or layers of mechanisms that are ordered in nature - a claim based on the results of the sciences not on a philosophical argument from their practice (see Collier,1994). Chemistry and physics for example suggest that the material world existed before organic life, and that organisms can only exist composed of and surrounded by matter. In this sense matter maybe said to be more basic than rationality or society or human history (Collier,1994). Thus some layers or strata may have explanatory primacy over others and the critical realism of Roy Bhaskar is an emergence theory not a reductive materialist one (Collier,1994). Bhaskar does not claim that the basic sciences such as chemistry can explain away the mechanisms of another strata such as the biological nor in this sense, can the laws of biology be reduced to those of chemistry. Rather Bhaskar is concerned with understanding the mechanisms in nature, not with arguments which say that "x" mechanism is causally more effective than "y" mechanism and may replace it. Bhaskar is therefore concerned with vertical levels of explanation and with showing that it is possible to develop a level of horizontal explanation in science. For example, economic mechanisms explain political and ideological mechanisms but cannot explain all historical events. Economic, political and ideological mechanisms all

contribute in no fixed proportion to such explanations (see Collier,1994). The progress of science, claims Bhaskar, is the process of deepening our knowledge of nature through vertical and horizontal explanation (1986). Underlying each mechanism is another waiting to be discovered. Social scientists are therefore always digging deeper.

There are direct links between the above and critical realism's distinctive discussions of science and social transformation.

Idealist theories for example state that there is no knowledge of things independent of mind (Collier,1994). Bhaskar argues that these claims about knowledge and phenomena are different from realist ones in the following way namely they fail to be fallibilist:

“[E]ven those who are aware that science is inherently fallibilistic in its practice will say that claims for scientific status on the part of this or that theory are a ploy to make the theory immune from criticism To claim objective truth for ones statements is to set oneself up for the possibility of refutation. All claims to objective knowledge are vulnerable to the refutation or disproof of others. Non-realism at the metatheoretical level claims infallibility and invulnerability and carries with it the danger of uncritical dogmatism because theorists are able to say” I am not claiming objective truth for my theories and hence I can go on saying what I like” (Collier,1994,14).

This point is a point of concern for contemporary South African feminists who are increasingly having to grapple with the question of race in their particular feminist perspectives. This thesis argues that certain feminist perspectives are not “appropriate” (see Walker,1991) to the South African context even though it is possible to gain much from these standpoint perspectives without adopting their inherent relativist assumptions. In this thesis an alternative is offered to the perpetuation of the myth that one type of feminism can be deemed more valid than another feminism because the former group are more oppressed or marginalised. Adopting a realist vision of science then signals that ones

knowledge claims are being made loudly and that one's belief in the claims made will invite challenges and will challenge other perspectives not for the enjoyment of bullying but because of a commitment on all sides to deepen one's understanding of social reality.

It is not the intention of this thesis to add to the ever growing literature on African women's reality. Rather a clear challenge is offered to South African feminists: Do we adopt an inherently flimsy explanation of society because (i.) we are fearful of discussions which might (in the short term) anger those who adopt terms which are ontologically invalid, (ii.) we are fearful of appearing like academics or social scientists who define themselves as committed to an intellectual and critical understanding of social reality so that our society can develop appropriately, and (iii.) having to consider that our feminist perspective may or may not be able to provide us with this explanation are we prepared to confront the inherent weakness of our own claims?

A critical realist philosophy of science and the best of epistemic relativist claims about the need for a sensitivity to issues of race are both challenging and interesting to South African feminists for a number of reasons.

Firstly, a realist philosophy of science offers feminism the vital ingredients of a powerful scholarship and the necessary tools for developing and strengthening its political movement. Briefly to reiterate the main points discussed in an earlier section, it is argued that (i) the purpose of realist research is the deepening of our knowledge about the world. Greater knowledge about the world is united with a politicised realist goal of social transformation. (ii) Critical realism underlines the vital role of theory, theory-development and theoretical discussion in social transformation. (iii) Critical realism is concerned with looking beyond the appearances of phenomena to their underlying structures, generative mechanisms and powers. (iv) Assumptions about infallibility and objectivity shape realist claims about the world. Realists argue that all knowledge is socially produced, open to refutation and correction. (v) Realism offers a powerful critique of idealist, positivist and relativist knowledge claims. These aspects of critical

realism are compatible with feminism's (as social movement and scholarship) interest in power issues, social transformation and the construction of knowledge. Critical realism offers feminist scholarship a strong ontological position from which critical, social theory can be developed.

Secondly, sensitivity to and awareness of the issues of race is vital in South African feminism (see Walker,1991, Ncgongo,1993, Muchena,1987, Cock,1980, etc.) Black feminists, in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and in Africa, have argued that a lack of sensitivity and awareness of black women's issues was common to the predominantly white feminist and predominantly black male liberation movements. These various issues have been identified as (i) Issues directly influenced by race - for example, the role of black women in white households, white women's roles in racist ideology and practice - brought to the forefront of feminist discussion by black feminists are vitally important. (ii) Black feminism, drawing on afrocentric humanist world views, contributes powerfully to discussions of oppression. (iii) Black feminism is centrally concerned with issues of power in society and works towards reconceptualising the concept of power, itself (see Collins,1991). (iv) Black feminism is also concerned with knowledge creation and how this contributes to emancipation.

Black feminists such as King (1989), hooks (1989), Collins (1991), Ncgongo (1993), Boyce-Davies (1986, 1990) have highlighted some very real issues for feminist theorists and activists. They bring to feminist scholarship challenging and refreshing insights on the power and the forms of resistance to oppression, used by black women. Caribbean feminist Gemima Tang Nain (1991) argues that feminism must draw on these insights if it is to seriously develop as critical social theory and movement. Nain provides an interesting, intelligent and brave argument for an alternative to what is typically defined as a Black feminist perspective in feminist scholarship (1991). Feminists argues Nain (1991) must adopt the best insights offered by racially different women without falling into the traps created by this relativism. Nain (1991) calls this "strengthened" insight an anti-racist feminist perspective. This anti-racist feminist perspective will be

discussed in detail in the following chapter and is a perspective which guides this study's examination of women in an Eastern Cape community. In the next chapters, a review of some of the contributions, feminist and otherwise, made to understanding power, race, class and gender realities is attempted.

Chapter 2:

Towards a critical feminist analysis of power

Overview

One of the factors inhibiting the development of a feminist theory and methodology appropriate to the complexity of the South African social order is the heritage of positivism. In the previous chapter it was argued that feminism's continued rejection of positivism was to be applauded but the rejection was incomplete and that some of the standard alternatives philosophically questionable. In this chapter, closer attention is paid to the issue of power which is of great importance in the search for an appropriate feminism for South African studies and for psychology in particular. In this chapter it is argued that critical realist guidelines are required for developing an appropriate understanding of power in South African feminist theory.

1. Some confusions in contemporary feminist analyses of power

Contemporary feminist scholarship may be understood as being dedicated to uncovering and exploring the reasons for the oppression of women in society, and to suggesting strategies for changing this. Ironically much of this scholarship has failed to critically examine the vital issue of power (see Ramazanoglu,1989). In this thesis, the lack of critical discussion of power in contemporary feminism is argued to be the major problem with the lack of focus in feminist theory and politics in the 1990's. The lack of due critical examination of power, argues feminist sociologist Caroline Ramazanoglu, (1989) is both surprising and ironic because power lies at the heart of feminism. Ramazanoglu (1989) has claimed that this omission is due to the considerable confusion between the broad strands of liberal, Marxist and radical feminism regarding where power is to be located in society. This "confusion" is indeed a factor in a great deal of feminist scholarship, and needs to be discussed before an additional reason for this conspicuous omission can be offered. Consequently this first section of this chapter presents and then moves beyond Ramazanoglu's (1989) argument.

Women's lack of power according to liberal feminism has been argued to arise not from the inherent structures of social, economic and political institutions in society but from "simply...our lack of equal civil rights and education opportunities" (Humm,1990, 118-9). Shaped by reformist attempts to improve the status of women in society, liberal feminism does not contest the system's operation or its legitimacy but regards the current distribution of power in society, and where that power is situated as broadly acceptable and appropriate.

Marxist feminists by contrast precede their discussions of power with descriptions of the material basis of women's subjugation in society and the relations between the modes of production and women's status. That is, Marxist feminists locate women's lack of power in society in women's class positions and the role of the family; and argue that women are denied by the institutions of society the potential to be "autonomous beings" (Kramarae & Treichler,1985). Marxist

feminists also tend to claim that male power is vested not only in the organisation of societal systems but in other material factors structuring gender relations, such as male physical strength.

Radical feminism locates male power in the structures and ideology of patriarchal society where patriarchy is assumed to be an independent dynamic force irreducible to either class or race. Radical feminists claim that the oppression of (all) women is the most fundamental oppression in society, in some cases maintain that it is that from which that all other oppressions, such as racism or classism, arise: "All forms of oppression are extensions of male supremacy....Patriarchy is the defining characteristic of our society" (Kramarae & Treichler, 1985, 183).

Black feminists and non-feminist theorists have commonly criticised radical feminist analyses of power more than the liberal and Marxist options. Hartsock (cited in Ramazanoglu, 1989) argues that radical feminism is most problematic and most guilty of feminism's over-concentration on a homogeneous women's oppression rather than on how power operates in society. With few exceptions patriarchy continues to be referred to in most feminist studies without critical and appropriate definition of this term and its use ranges from for example a reference to conspiracy theories in which all men are co-operatively opposed to all women to vague references to "something which oppresses women and which must be opposed" (Mills, 1991, 17). Mills has stated that the major problem with patriarchal power models is their inability to explain how resistance may come about (1991).

Drawing on the concerns expressed by Ramazanoglu (1989) and Mills (1991) it will be argued that the aforementioned feminist models are based on conceptions of power which are implicitly deterministic and dualistic. This results from the inadequate exorcism of the true legacy of positivism - the inability to grapple with power (see Spurrett, 1994) - within feminism.

For the most part, mainstream feminist analyses of power have contributed little to understanding and changing the realities of black women's lives in South Africa

(see discussions of this in Walker,1991, Ncgongo,1993, Muchena, 1987). Black feminists have argued that for many black women these analyses of power and society are incompatible with their struggle against the oppression that they face as working class women of colour. Nain (1991) has argued that black women are either ambivalent towards or reject feminism outright because (i) certain concepts such as patriarchy are viewed as race-blind, inapplicable and irrelevant to black women, and (ii) some practices of mainstream feminism have demonstrated insensitivity to the experiences of black women and the entire "black" population in society. It was argued that issuing primacy to sexism meant that racism was viewed as a by-product of male dominance, and thus not independently worthy of study (see Nain,1991, Collins,1991).

The response offered by black feminism to mainstream feminism cannot be ignored or side-stepped, especially in the South African context. The insensitive shortcomings within mainstream feminism must be corrected, and (South African) feminists must acknowledge that as feminists they use "gender as a major category of social analysis...which is not to say that other issues, for instance the struggle against racism or colonialism, or other social categories such as race or class, are irrelevant or necessarily less important" (Walker,1991, xxiii).

Less rigorous feminist analyses of power relations have often over-relied on the concept of patriarchy. There are abundant examples of this but for the sake of brevity one example has been cited to illustrate the results of this. Thiam's (1986) examination of every aspect of the lives of black women in terms of patriarchal relations between men and women created a monistic, unilinear depiction of women of colour, and the nature of their realities. The contradiction, diversity and complexity that constitutes black women's lives was unfortunately absent in her scholarship.

2. Against standpoint perspectives

The project of developing a feminist scholarship which can acknowledge the contradiction, diversity and complexity of black women's lives in South Africa has

not been, nor will it be, an easy task. Attempts to achieve this have often relied upon standpoint epistemology and related theoretical assumptions (see Meena, 1987; Ncgongo, 1993, Muchena, 1993). Standpoint assumptions suggest that black women's lives are *uniquely* shaped by the social, political and economic institutions in society. This theoretical perspective of uniqueness which by necessity rests on a fundamental understanding of power is argued to be problematic. Standpoint theory claims that the powers of black women as individuals and as a social group have been mostly ignored, marginalised or omitted except when these women are discussed in a particular way (see Harding, 1987, 1993, 1986). In order to fully explore this claim some key issues in feminist responses to "male-stream" scholarship on power need briefly be discussed.

Feminist analyses of "male-stream" (non-feminist) discussions of power have argued that social life was assumed to be male, white and middle class. It was further argued that these perspectives assumed that women and men established nuclear families according to classical capitalist guidelines - men worked while women looked after the family. Feminists claimed that these theories drew a distinction between paid and unpaid labour, and identified men as workers in the realm of the public, political economy. Women were identified as "non-workers" performing household activities in the private, apolitical realm of the home (Charlton, 1984). If women did participate in the realm of the public economy, it was defined as an activity which provided them with "pocket money" (Charlton, 1984). It was assumed that men were always the breadwinners and the only true workers in the household and society. Within these theories, men are viewed as possessors and wielders of public, political, economic power while women by contrast wielded domestic, apolitical, non-economic power (Charlton, 1984).

Feminist scholarship was successful in identifying certain characteristic features of white, "male-stream" knowledge. One such characteristic feature was that of an "either/ or", dichotomous categorisation of phenomena such as black and white, women and men. Black feminist Patricia Hill Collins (1991) argued that these

dichotomous categories not only defined the types of research questions but the *a priori* assumptions which guided the study of women, men and social life. A secondly important characteristic was that the "male-stream" analyses of power over-relied on the notion of domination (Collins,1991). They established divisions between the power-holders and the powerless because they arose from notions of hierarchical or top-down power relationships existing between unwilling victims, forced to bend to the will of the more powerful. In combination, these features quantified and ranked dichotomous phenomena in society, denigrating one half and privileging the other. Feminist critiques also showed that defining women and men as dichotomous, distinct groups in society implied that women were an homogeneous group with common needs and standpoints. Collins for example argued that class and racial divisions were marginalised and rested on a dichotomy in which subordinate roles and perspectives were occupied by people of colour, women, and the working class (1991).

Collins highlighted that these theories automatically assumed that subordinate groups identified with the powerful because they supposedly possessed no valid, independent interpretation of their own power and their own oppression separate from that of their oppressors (1991). Consequently, the oppressed were viewed as less human than their oppressors, as less capable of articulating their standpoint, needs and interests, and were unable to harness their own power as a group in society (Collins,1991).

Certain South African feminist researchers have contributed positively to feminist critiques of traditional analyses of power. Bozzoli (1991) for example has argued that traditional analyses lent themselves to what she termed "victimology" and "rah rah" perspectives of black women. "Victimology studies" of black women implied that black women were either simply not there or were "permanently colonised and dehumanised victims deprived of their humanity and selves" while "rah rah" studies upheld a vision of power as a personal attribute/possession of individual women, and failed to appreciate power as a socially mediated phenomenon (see Bozzoli,1991). Traditional analyses of power were argued to

depict black women as above and beyond power relations in society, and to deny that the realities of black women are shaped by the exercise of power in social institutions (see Bozzoli, 1991).

One of the initial solutions relied on to rectify mainstream victimologies and "rah rah" perspectives involved a strategy of simple addition, or of just "adding" black women into the theoretical equation without changing the underlying philosophical assumptions (King, 1989). The underlying philosophical assumptions shaping these analyses, argues King (1989), upholds not only a theoretical tradition of these women's marginalisation but a subtle process of "remembering" black women purely for the sake of preserving a pre-existing theory or body of knowledge. Black feminism therefore has been presented more recently as an *alternative* to traditional non-feminist and mainstream feminist analyses of power.

3. Black feminist analyses of power

It must be noted that for the most part what is understood as "black feminism" are the views of black feminists in the United States and Britain. This is not unproblematic. It is a cause of concern for feminists working towards understanding the social complexity of developing countries and ending the oppression of different women in those societies. This section therefore discusses with some reservations what is argued to be the unproblematic use of black feminist perspectives for South Africa.

As an alternative, black feminist analyses of power reject monistic definitions of power in what it refers to as white (read "mainstream") feminist struggles and male-dominated race struggles. Resting on an historical, dynamic understanding of black women, black feminism acknowledges that there exists a real relation between theory and women's position in society. Black feminism is committed to the principles of humanism (see Obbo, 1980; Qunta, 1987; hooks, 1989; King, 1989; Boyce-Davies, 1990; Collins, 1991; Meena, 1992; James and Busia, 1993). For black feminism, then, its definitions of power reflect a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination permeating western culture and the spill-

over into its academia (Collins,1991). As a movement black feminism commits itself to fighting oppression in society, and argues that it is simultaneously a struggle against oppression in society and an affirmation of the empowerment of all women (Collins,1991).

Collins (1991) has argued that black feminist definitions of power are unique and different because they do not place exclusive emphasis on visible, public activity. Black feminist analyses are argued to be sensitive to the dialectics of women's roles in society (Collins,1991). For example, black women are viewed as having a long history of participation in various race-group social and political organisations despite their simultaneous exclusion from the leadership positions of these organisations and its organisations' absence of an articulated agenda of women's issues (Collins,1991). Black feminism's overt humanism allows it to identify inequitable power relations in society as oppressive of the "powerless" groups and dehumanising for the "oppressors". Therefore argues Collins (1991) the traditional dichotomies of "oppressed other" fall away as the inter-relatedness between women and men, blacks and whites, workers and capitalists are highlighted in black feminist scholarship.

Black feminist Pauli Murray has argued that black women in most western literature are objectified and portrayed as paralysed by a sense of helplessness (in Collins,1991). Many black feminists have responded to this bias. Deborah King for example (1989) claims that black women's activism, action and power is neither one-dimensional nor dichotomous but dialectical. Consequently, the authority of black women is viewed not as an act of domination but as a (legitimate) humanist process that makes communities stronger, challenges social oppression and nurtures resistance strategies (Collins,1989). Authority is viewed as a force within all communities which involves the re-affirmation of community, individual and life, and which provides women with self-actualisation, self-definition and self-determination (Collins,1991). Black women are therefore no longer rendered passive and powerless victims.

As indicated above, black feminism argues that it neither stresses one dimension of oppression nor provides only partial insights into the oppression of black women. Black feminists have argued that monistic analyses of power are characteristically limited in their attempts to provide solutions to the empowerment of black women and end depiction of these women as victims. Deborah King (1989) drawing on the insights of black feminists such as Audrey Lorde and bell hooks argues that the perpetuation of these characteristics are true of many theories. The first and most widely used example of this argues King (1989) is the "race-sex" analogy within which racism and sexism are described as compatible phenomena. This model was a well-established pedagogical tool for both the theoretical conceptualisation of and political resistance to sexual inequality (King, 1989). Very little is learnt from this analogy (King, 1989). She further argues that when the experiences of black women are assumed to be compatible with and comparable to those of black men and white women, it is common for any discussion of women of colour to become superfluous (1989). King claims (1989, 78-79) that "it is precisely those differences between blacks and women, between black men and black women, between black women and white women that are crucial to understanding the nature of black womanhood".

A second example of a model which gained acceptance as a superior analysis of black women's oppression was the "triple jeopardy" approach (King, 1989). The "triple jeopardy" model of racism, classism and sexism was a partial improvement on the "race-sex" analogy but "it [did] not fully convey the dynamics of the multiple forms of discrimination" (King, 1989, 80). The "triple jeopardy" approach was susceptible to assertions that one "~ism" could supplant another and was unable to describe racism, sexism and classism as three interdependent control systems (King, 1989).

As an alternative, King suggests that the "multiple jeopardy" model of oppression be used to describe several, simultaneous oppressions and the multiplicate relations between them (1989). Transformed into an arithmetic formula, the multiple jeopardy analysis can be represented as "racism multiplied by sexism

multiplied by classism". This is offered as an improvement on the "racism plus classism plus sexism" formula of the "triple jeopardy" analysis (King,1989). A multiple jeopardy model, argues King significantly improves on the analysis of black women's oppression because: black women assume central importance; the complex variety of their social roles for day-to-day survival is recognised; and the conceptualisation of black womanhood is dynamic and dialectical (King,1989).

Multiple jeopardy supposedly combats the many types of oppression and discrimination that black women face from various liberation movements as most liberation ideologies have an inherently monistic nature, argues King (1989). For example, race-based liberation movements and theories have become pluralistic because of the wide-spread economic oppression of black people; and black women have formed part of this racial solidarity which has been a fundamental feature of their resistance to domination in society. But intraracial politics of gender within these organisations were experienced as overly restrictive and incalculably detrimental to the prospects of full liberation for these women (King,1989). Thus some black women have looked to feminism as an alternative but (mainstream) feminism called for the most part for a universal sisterhood. "[P]resumably black women are included in this sisterhood but nonetheless, invisibility and marginality characterise much of our relationship to the women's movement", claims King (1989,90). Mainstream feminism claimed King has been predominantly white, and has excluded and devalued black women. "Theoretical blinders [have] obscured the ability of certain feminists first to recognise the multifaceted nature of women's oppression and then to envision theories that encompass those realities" (King,1989,91). Many black feminists have argued that black women have experienced racism within mainstream feminism organisations, were under-represented, marginalised and relegated to subordinate roles. Many white feminists, who mistakenly assuming that anti-sexism would abolish racial prejudice and discrimination, were thus identified as denying important aspects of the history and experiences of women of colour (King,1989). Overt liberalism within white feminism was also identified as problematic. Many black women therefore rejected both the monism of racism theory and feminism and opted for

mobilisation around and politicisation of class issues. Black women, argued King, have a long history of class discrimination evident in the types of and conditions of employment into which they have been forced - such as domestic, non-household, agricultural and specific types of industrial labour (1989). Black women are, argues King, increasingly frustrated with the theoretical and strategic indifference of class politics to women; sexist practices and policies in the socialist and union movements; and with the almost exclusive concentration on essentially male issues (1989).

Having described the core features of King's argument, some attention must be paid to her claims in the context of black feminism in general. Black feminism claims to achieve a number of things: (i) re-description; (ii) conscientisation; (iii) fostering survivorhood; (iv) acknowledgement of women's spheres of influence; and (v) liberation through humanism (see hooks, 1989; King, 1989; Collins, 1991; Boyce-Davies, 1990). In the first instance, through re-description black women are labelled independent, pro-active individuals who are no longer "victims" but "survivors". It is argued that the powers and roles of black women are re-conceptualised and black women are viewed as empowered beings able to engage with their life realities (see King, 1989). Although idealist in motivation, there is nothing essentially wrong with this type of re-description of self. It has been shown in various liberation theories that re-description provides a challenge to the oppressors' descriptions and labelling of the self, and as a strategy is a necessary first step in changing the psychological status quo in society (see Woods, 1987). Ultimately, however the redescriptive activity is a "feel-good" exercise which does no harm but makes no actual practical contribution to changing the real circumstances of oppression. Equating re-description with at the very least empowerment, and at most, emancipation is theoretically and practically anorexic (see chapter 1 for a more substantial discussion of this re-description-psychological approach).

Secondly, the statement that black women possess a consciousness, articulated standpoints and set of needs different from black men and white women is to

some extent an unproblematic claim. Some of these differences are qualitative (see chapter 3 for further details) but it is not only contentious but unsubstantiated to insist (as in some less than rigorous feminist scholarship) that black women have the most valid understanding of oppression because of these differences black women. This is also true of the claim that the comprehension of oppression is in principle impossible for anyone who is not a black woman. This relapse into a quasi-relativism is an unfitting, hasty solution to an important question about the need for diversity *and* union in emancipation politics.

In response to the third claim made by black feminists, that black feminism shifts attention away from the oppression (and hence victimisation) of black women to resistance, there is a need for feminists at large to pay close attention to this. There is a need to acknowledge women's struggles without exclusively emphasising the sensationalist victimisation of women in these situations. This focus in black feminism can only enhance the theory and politics of the women's struggle. Claims about black women's active roles in extended family networks, the community as "family" is a significant challenge to the carelessness in a lot of the feminist analyses of motherhood, family and women's experiences of this.

Finally, feminism must attend critically to the claim that black women supposedly have female spheres of influence, authority and power that produce a world view markedly different from that advanced by the dominant group. An example of this would be the ability to make culture, transmit folkways, norms and customs, as well as to build shared ways of seeing the world that ensured group survival (see King,1989; Boyce-Davies,1990; Collins,1991). Black feminism's argument that there are dialectical elements in women's powers in oppressive situations can provide interesting insights for developing strategies which can assist in non-sexist socialisation of children, for example. The emphasis is that "women's power" is not dominance but humanist creativity or power which does not dominate but nurtures both women and men to confront oppressive social institutions. Up to a point it is possible for feminist theorising and political strategising to incorporate these humanist insights but it is nothing short of

alarming that the primary emphasis in black feminism (and standpoint theory) is given to a wishy-washy, cheerful side-stepping of a major concern with *de facto* power dynamics in society. It must not and cannot be ignored in the midst of fashionable rhetoric and politically correct jargon.

In summary then, black feminism proposes some interesting insights into oppression and power but fails to provide a strongly argued case for its appropriateness as feminist theory and methodology for understanding the South African social order. Its appeals to redescription, humanism and its inherent idealism and relativist assumptions suggest that it lacks solid theoretical and practical foundations.

4. Beyond interactionist analyses of power

Strict structuralist and even stricter humanist analyses of oppression commonly and erroneously assume that there is nothing but structures or people in society, hence the over-simplification of the strategies for societal liberation. Structuralism is understood as the assumption that structures determine human life whether absolute or historically (Williams, 1983) and humanism is understood as assumption that history is (anthropocentrically defined as) human development and self-perfection (see Williams, 1983). This over-simplification has been recognised by some theorists and feminist scholars, and attempts have been made to develop interactionist models such as structural humanism or humanist structuralism - the latter being more common in feminism. The interactionist perspective however remains a simplistic solution to a complex theoretical and practical phenomenon.

Critical realist Roy Bhaskar has attempted to move beyond this interactionism in his Transformational Model of Social Activity referred to forthwith as the TMSA. (An attempt has been made to concisely and clearly reproduce the key issues in the TMSA before moving on to a critical evaluation of this model as an improvement on relativist, standpoint, etc. perspectives but in view of the depth of detail and the regular instances of tortured writing in Scientific Realism and

Human Emancipation (1986) some omissions are unavoidable). Preceding his discussion of the merits of the TMSA, Bhaskar initially concerns himself with the need for clarity about what is the object of analysis in the social sciences. Following Bhaskar, the object of analysis in the social sciences is identified as society or that which is “both the ever-present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency. And praxis is both work that is conscious production and (normally unconscious) reproduction of the conditions of production, that is society.” (1989a, 34-5). This concern with what is the object of study informs his discussion of the merits of the TMSA. In Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation (1986), Bhaskar illustrates that the exclusiveness of both the humanist focus on human agency or the structuralist focus on structures is fundamentally weak. This “weakness” (1986,125) he argues arises out of the lack of recognition that it is not possible to reduce or re-construct human agency to/from social form and vice-versa (1986). Rather, human agency and social form or structure are the sites of “potentially” independent, consistent, complementary sciences which are conditioned by one another and refer to the same concrete flux of human life (1986). Bhaskar argues that action-centred approaches (such as black feminist analyses of power) tend to see social objects as “a result of or as constituted by intentional or meaningful, essentially individual human behaviour” and form-centred approaches see social objects as “possessing a life of their own, as collectives, external to and coercing the individual” (1986, 125). Within the TMSA then, society is not the creation of unconditional individuals, or their actions and does not exist independently of it, while individuals neither completely determine nor are completely determined by social structures.

In relation to this chapter’s specific concern with power, oppression and emancipation, the TMSA provides interesting insights into (a) cognitive and material spheres, (b) determinant non-dominant structures, (c) the role of a psychological science, (d) the validity of gender as a category of social analysis. Each of these points will be discussed in light of the previous issues raised in this chapter.

Firstly, in returning the focus of social scientific analysis to society, social relations, in the TMSA, Bhaskar argues that oppression exists in more than just the cognitive sphere (i.e. the individual). Within this model, Bhaskar recognises that the oppressed may understand their oppression (or they may not) because cognitive deception (about social reality constructed by the power dynamics in society) is assumed to be the first line of defence against social emancipation. Bhaskar is concerned to highlight that cognitive enlightenment is a necessary though not a sufficient condition of emancipation. He claims that that which is believed to be cognitive "enlightenment" may in fact be cognitive dissonance and could fail to lead to emancipation. Within the TMSA, there is an overt recognition that "the main part of the work of emancipation is not cognitive but consists in toil and trouble, conflict, changes in power relations, the breaking up of some social structures and the building up of others" (Collier, 1994, 191).

Bhaskar's model of power and emancipation affirms the position of social psychological theorists like Tajfel (1981, 1982) and attempts to move beyond individualistic conceptualisations of society and social beings. Bhaskar does not state that psychology is or can be superfluous to sociology or vice versa because there is an "ontological hiatus between people and society" (1989a, 37) and each respective science can illuminate different but interrelated strata of reality. This warning is vital for psychological insights on emancipation strategising. Much of psychology has for too long been committed to the positivist legacy of individualism. As already illustrated in chapter 1, positivism is unable to construct a suitable analysis of power (Spurrett, 1994) while the current swing towards idealism and relativism in feminist scholarship is similarly problematic because theoretically it is unable to explain the constraints which make emancipation necessary. The latter is practically destined to preserve real constraints which inhibit emancipation because it claims an emancipation entirely internal to the mind or discourse. The stress on "inner" liberation or redescription through challenging the dominant discourse within certain quarters of many liberation movements is states Andrew Collier indicative of the periods of difficulty (and crisis) experienced by the movement (1994). Critical realism and critical realist

philosophy's concern with infallibilism, power and commitment to emancipation avoids this "retreat to the inner citadel" (Collier, 1994, 200).

The strategies for societal emancipation within the TMSA rest on unique, sophisticated conceptualisation of how power operates in society. The TMSA states that economic structures in society are determinant of the societal order in the last instance but not necessarily dominant (Bhaskar, 1986). This claim facilitates the development of a feminist description of the various levels of oppression in society, their inter-relatedness while avoiding the common pitfalls of strict humanism or strict structuralism. The TMSA ensures that emancipation politics remains firmly grounded in scientific theory which provides the critical and deep-level understanding of power and oppression (Bhaskar, 1986).

The above 2 points - the roles of the cognitive and the determinant (not dominant) spheres in emancipation - mark the TMSA's significant difference from black feminism and humanism despite some superficial echoes of claims about power (i.e. that knowledge can lead to liberation). Philosophically critical realism emphasises the role of explanatory knowledge in increasing the range of real (non-utopian) human possibilities and by default decreasing the range of imagined ones (see 1989,181-2). This empowers rather than undermines social movements (Collier, 1994) because unlike black and mainstream feminism, the TMSA is committed the issue of infallibilism and exhibits clear evidence of its faith and commitment in its own knowledge products and world view.

In brief then, the TMSA developed by Roy Bhaskar provides some important insights which assist feminist scholars' attempts to develop a theory and methodology appropriate to understanding the complexity of the social order in South Africa.

Firstly, the shift of focus to power, emancipation, oppression invalidates relativist, standpoint theory claims that science (realist or otherwise) is reactionary and elitist. Following Walker (1991) while politicisation gives intensity and topicality to academic feminist scholarship, both theory and practice are interlinked in and vital

for the project of women's liberation. Secondly, the TMSA illuminates the conservatism inherent in positivist and in idealist assumptions about society which underlie relativist and standpoint perspectives. Critical realism ensures that South African feminism can avoid falling for readily available claims that emancipation is possible through redescription alone. Concerns with "internal" emancipation and discourse facilitates bickering between feminists activists and scholars, achieves little, wastes resources and directs attention away from the true feminist project - women's emancipation. Thirdly, decisions about which strategy or perspective is appropriate are no longer based on arbitrary consensus or fashionable opinion but on critical discussions of the political and philosophical merits of those perspectives. Appeals to the "elitism" of science are invalid (ironically reflecting that those who make these claims realise their theory lacks merit and substance in the face of others' critique) because realist social science unlike positivism and the idealist position of standpoint theory, relativism, post-structuralism is explicitly politicised and concerned with human emancipation. Finally, Bhaskar's insights into power in society validates gender as category of social analysis because in combination they (hopefully) continue to direct attention towards the deeper strata of social reality in South Africa, and assists with decisions about which strategies increase the range of human possibilities for emancipation and which ones do not.

In light of the strengths of the Bhaskarian analysis of oppression and emancipation - and by implication power - it has been argued that black and mainstream feminist analyses of power present respective political and philosophical problems for South African feminist scholarship. It is the argument of this thesis that while there is an urgent need for academic feminism to attend to the issue of race and racism in South Africa, it is not necessary for a black feminist perspective to be adopted. Gemima Tang Nain's (1991) argument for an anti-racist feminism is argued to be philosophically and politically compatible with the grounded realities of black women and with the development of an appropriate feminist perspective in South Africa.

These critical realist insights in combination with anti-racist feminism shape the attention paid in the following chapter to the economic, political, social and psychological strata of social reality and the gendered impact of this on black women in South Africa.

Chapter 3:

Towards a consideration of the societal strata shaping black women's realities in South Africa

Overview

In this chapter the impact of a number of factors - including pre-industrial, economic, political - on the power relations shaping black women's various realities in South Africa are examined. Reference is made to numerous relevant studies and suggestions are made concerning strategies for incorporating lessons from these studies into an appropriate South African feminism.

1. Preliminary observations

In the previous chapters, it was argued that contemporary feminist scholarship (and consequently its politics) has been blunted by the legacy of positivism. Positivism invited and nurtured the absence of theoretical consideration of and focus on power (Spurrett, 1994). (This follows largely from the positivist insistence that it is not the business of science to consider the causes of events, only to discover formal relationships between them.) It was argued above that critical realism facilitates in appropriate South African feminist scholarship a refreshing examination of black women's lives free from fashionable rhetoric and politically correct jargon because it stresses (i) that power is the thing which shapes their lives and that which can change it; (ii) that there are various kinds of oppression - race, class, gender - at work together in the oppression of black women but economics is determinate (not necessarily dominant) and this must be evident in feminist scholarship; (iii) that there are false beliefs about women on the part of men, about blacks on the part of whites, about poor on the part of the bourgeoisie in operation in society and in scholarship; (iv) that the affects of oppression are, among others, disempowerment, psychic fragmentation, lack of self-esteem etc. and; (v) that an appropriate psychological science can describe and explain the effects of oppression and hence suggest strategies for challenging oppression and achieving emancipation. Particularly a feminist psychology could contribute to understanding the oppression of women, and to the project of ending that oppression. In this chapter it is argued that the development of an emancipatory psychological science necessitates a consideration of among others the impact of the pre-industrial Nguni notions of womanhood, the political and the economic strata on black women's lives in South Africa.

2. The impact of pre-industrial Nguni world views

Jaclyn Cock's mammoth study of domestic workers (Cock, 1980) claimed, *inter alia*, that pre-industrial Nguni realities, although formed in a context vastly different from today, still impacted upon the lives of black women in South Africa.

Black women stated Cock (1980) subjected to many of the customs of traditional Nguni culture faced strong social sanctioning powers in various aspects of their lives. In *Maids and Madams*, Cock (1980) argued that certain pre-industrial world views about women and men restricted women to roles of perpetual domesticity. Black women she argued were socialised into a concept of womanhood which trained them to be good mothers and good wives. On the one hand, it provided for women a measure of status and respect in the community while on the other hand, it potentially trapped them in a cycle of never-ending domesticity and dependence on men (Cock,1980).

Although over 25 years old and obviously "dated", Cock's recognition of the impact of pre-industrial Nguni world views has been taken up in more recent works by for example Guy (1990), Thiam (1991), Ncgongo (1993). This does not imply however that there is an acceptance of the existence of sexism in pre-industrial society. Debate has raged between those who claim that traditionalism is unmitigated sexism and those who claim that sexism is a by-product of racism. Rather than continuing this self-perpetuating debate, South African feminism should acknowledge certain points and then move on. Insights from sociological and anthropological evidence aided by psychological studies provide vital information about women's roles in this pre-industrial context. These insights must be incorporated into feminist decisions about which strategies are appropriate for mobilising women, combating the many false beliefs which exist about black women, and which erroneously inform "imagined" solutions for women's emancipation in South Africa. (It is that which is meant by move on rather than sinking into the quagmire of judgmental relativist scholarship). With few exceptions, anthropological and sociological studies suggest that pre-industrial world views defined women as mothers bound to domestic settings in the umzi.

The area of contentious debate seems to be around how to interpret this. (In a moment of brief postmodernist madness, it must be acknowledged that that these interpretations do appear to reveal more about the writers' world views but this is an associative but separate issue). Rather what is of importance for an

appropriate South African feminism is the extent to which these pre-industrial notions (developed in a vastly different context) continue to impact on women in this century, and how in combination with economics, politics and other social realities it contributes to the oppression of and inhibits the emancipation of the majority of women in South Africa. In brief then, it does appear to be self-delusory as Nain suggests to claim that sexist views held by black men of black women are due to racism only (in South Africa's case colonialism and apartheid) and not the pre-industrial context (see Nain,1991) Secondly, there appears to be a variation of the extent of the impact of pre-industrial world views on some women's lives more than others, and differently for women and men. This appears to be no different from a recognition that the notion of chivalrous behaviour (developed in a context vastly different from now) continues to impact on middle class women and men in subtle and different ways. Thirdly, arguments about which "~ism" (sexism versus traditionalism) is the most invidious are petty and waste time in scholarship and political discussion better used for the emancipation of women.

The extent to which pre-industrial notions of appropriate gender socialisation impacts on black women appears to be related to the macro and micro-political and economic forces in South African society. The following sections will examine in closer detail these issues.

3. The political stratum

Black women in South Africa have a strong tradition of fighting against oppression in various forms. Recent feminist scholarship and historiography have illustrated the extent and success of these protests against for example the extension of the pass laws to women by the apartheid regime (see Walker, 1991; Fenwick & Rosenhain, 1991; Seekings, 1991; Seidman, 1993; Guy, 1990). A case in point is Charlotte Maxeke who led the newly formed ANC Women's League's 1918 protest against the extension of "passes" to black women in the Orange Free State (Fenwick & Rosenhain,1991). Since the 1900's, and for the first 5 decades of this century, black women's protests centred to a large degree on the influx control

system. Black women thus participated with others - "Coloured" men and women, Zulu and Xhosa communities - in their protests against colonialism and later apartheid.

But in the 1950's there was a distinct change in the focus of women's mobilisation and the issues around which they organised protests. From the 1950's onwards black women intensified their protests around two important issues: the 1952 passes act and the 1953 Bantu Education Act. Between 1955 and 1956 it was reported that 40 000 women participated in these protests on 39 occasions in 30 locations (Spink, 1991). This does not imply that black women ignored other political issues during this period. The 1959 Cato Manor protest for example involved women and children demanding the closure of municipal beer halls which had opened in the area; and legal recognition of women's right to brew traditional beer. Municipal drinking halls - "where men gathered publicly to drink and spend what money they had" (Fenwick & Rosenhain, 1991, 110) - represented for these women the promotion of alcoholism among African males by the apartheid government and thus the re-enforcement of poverty in most households in the area. These pre-1960's protests then appeared to foster black women's powerful mobilisation against simultaneously race, class and gender discrimination which made black women's mobilisation during this period so dynamic and strong (see Walker, 1991; Seekings, 1991).

The following decades however did alter this. Noticeable and dramatic changes occurring in the power struggle against apartheid and within the liberation movements themselves affected the nature of black women's protests during the 1960's and 1970's. Political restrictions on ANC membership and leadership affected ANC women activists especially harshly as the Women's Leagues were strong grass-rooted support bases for the ANC with a politicised, rich history of mobilisation. Political banning and "crackdowns" during this era forced many (male and female) activists into exile or into extensive periods of imprisonment. The impact of this on women activists is mostly absent from (largely non-feminist) liberation literature and historiography.

Imprisonment of most of the ANC leadership and the facts of the struggle-in-exile created a temporary leadership vacuum in the political arena in South Africa in the late 1960's. As Black Consciousness took root, Steven Biko became unarguably the most important activist in the 1970's. Black Consciousness gained widespread popularity particularly among youth and student organisations as it defined and created a political struggle overtly based on positive, psychological definitions of "African-ness" and "blackness" which rejected white-defined roles for blacks (Woods,1987). In the (albeit dated) writings of black consciousness activists both male and female, women had a particular role in the movement. Dhlamini (1973) for example warned that it was a mistake to believe that women could be liberated outside of the "race"-struggle. Feminism was labelled a white women's struggle with no relevance to black women, and black women were unambiguously warned that should they adopt feminist agendas they would unavoidably annihilate themselves (Dhlamini,1973). In the Black Consciousness movement, black women were not to divide the African-race struggle.

In much Black Consciousness literature, women's needs were viewed as undifferentiated from men's and hence adequately articulated by the (male) leadership. A rationalising of this gender-imperialism has been offered by many black scholars. Muchena (1987) for example "explains" that male activists actually perceived women to be powerful and therefore needed to harness women's power supposedly to reinforce the strength of a unified African political struggle. Quite clearly then the myth of the strong black woman was everywhere.

On paper and on the ground Black Consciousness was androcentric, and black women were viewed by activists and academics as having a lower propensity to organise than men (see Meer,1987). The reality was that women were less active during this period in male-stream, public political actions and to some extent in the 1980's (Seekings,1991) but women cannot alone be held responsible for this.

In the early 1980's women mobilised strongly around for example civic issues. By the mid 1980's however even civic protests soon came to be dominated by a male, bureaucratic elite states (Seekings,1991). The women who were actually

visible in community protests came from backyard shacks and squatter camps - sites where women headed their own households (Seekings,1991). Women were excluded by many male activists from radicalised, increasingly confrontational and violent protests in the 1980's. In addition exaggerated gender ideologies and patronising attitudes to women's participation - either in fighting or strategic planning of the protests - flourished among male activists (Seekings,1991). Male machismo behaviour and attitudes nurtured sexist beliefs that women should cook, look after the kids, and leave politics to the men. Many male activists came to view women's roles in the struggle as succouring the fraught, and providing food and sexual services (Seekings, 1991). It suggests that personal and egotistical battles were fought simultaneously with ideological and political ones (Seekings,1991). Changes in township politics, the escalation of violent protest and the prominence of the youth affected women's political struggles so "for the most part [women were] demobilised, excluded (possibly through choice) from confrontational activities. Women's roles were limited to the more gender-specific role of "mother" or "peace keeper"" (Seekings,1991, 86-7).

A combination of mythical stereotypes about black women - strong, silent black woman and woman as mother - exists in a lot of nationalist literature in South Africa. Descriptions of women as mothers were more than a linguistic collapsing of vernacular terms (for example the Xhosa term "umama") for women and mothers. These descriptions were ideological, emotive and defined a certain type of political participation. Women were expected to possess certain qualities (defined by men) of motherly-like care and concern which supposedly had the power to defeat apartheid (Gaitskell et al,1989). References to "mothering" often incorporated women's mediating and peace keeping roles: Women were called on to (and did) mediate between the security forces and the youth in township confrontations. Delegations of African mothers often met the police to demand the release of detainees. In other cases such as the 1986 Port Alfred protests, women attempted to discipline the youth and demand an end to the youth's unilateral decisions regarding the struggle (Forrest & Jochelson,1986).

These notions of womanhood (associated with motherhood) pervading much of the struggle literature are patronising and sexist restrictions the roles of black women in political struggles because for the most part they reflect the views of black male activists. This claim is often criticised for inferring that many black women's choice to be mothers is a sign of conservatism. Black feminists have angrily stated that certain "white" feminist have misunderstood the power of mothering in black communities (see Collins, 1989a; Muchena, 1987). They have argued that black women have forged their own definitions of mothers and mothering into a form of radical societal power. Black feminists have claimed that white male attitudes towards black mothers imply that black women fail to discipline their kids and are responsible for the social disintegration in these communities while black male definitions are restrictive and passive because women are viewed as the "super-strong black mothers" romanticised in African poetry and literature (Collins, 1991). In essence then, black feminism has argued that black women's mothering has been demeaned by white men, restricted by black men, and devalued by white feminists. These attitudes supposedly fail to appreciate African women's definitions of their roles, the powers associated with these roles and the contradictory, dynamic, dialectical, exploitative and self-actualising nature of motherhood for black women (Collins, 1991). Motherhood as an institution is argued to contribute to a child's survival, facilitating the development of attitudes and values needed to reject the psychological oppression of blacks in society (Collins, 1991). Black feminist perspectives on black motherhood are largely absent from feminist literature in South Africa, and Walker (1991) has stated that it must be fully addressed and critically rectified. Chapter 7 of this study attempts in part to critically examine this.

Male domination of leadership positions in race-centred liberation struggles since the 1960's has served to strengthen women's separate, autonomous mobilisation. Gale Seidman has argued that separate organisation and mobilisation was a key step toward ensuring that women's social issues were placed on the political agenda of the government of national unity (1993). Separate mobilisation argued Seidman encouraged debate among women about their needs as workers, as

women and as Africans. The decrease in male activists' outright rejection of gender issues in the anti-apartheid movement in the 1990's states Seidman is significant because it suggests that these articulated needs have slowly succeeded in "getting through". Seidman claims that although a lot of black women do not use the term "feminist" in any other context these very demands would be labelled as such (1993). But irrespective of the label the manifestation of these demands in anti-apartheid movements emanates from women constituting the grassroots base support of these movements and not from the national leadership or a few educated women (Seidman, 1993). Women activists in South Africa articulate political issues and possess a political consciousness very different from their male counterparts. Seidman implies that there is a qualitative difference in black women and men's consciousness. This argument does require some qualification as it implies that women are a unified group in South Africa with similar political consciousness. Seidman does not fully examine the economic and class differences at operation often in the same township or community, and consequently how this shapes women's political consciousness.

4. The economic stratum

One of the most challenging areas for feminist scholarship in South African are the consequences of the impact of macroeconomics on black women's lives. Black women have been drawn into the paid economy in particular ways and their participation in the industrialised, paid labour force revealed they were most often located in the lowest paid and lowest graded positions (Meer, 1990). Racism and sexism in the South African economy have had a unique impact on black women. White men and women during the increased industrialisation of the economy in the first half of this century, moved vertically into skilled levels of employment while black men and women shifted horizontally into "masculine and feminine" types of employment (see Cock et al, 1980; Barret et al, 1985; Meer, 1990).

Since 1920, the largest source of employment for black women has been domestic work, superseded after 1945 by employment in the "soft" (clothing,

leather and textiles) industries. The entry of black women into the paid work force followed after black men had left certain forms of employment for better wages as is the case with domestic work which until the 1920's was a male enclave (Meer,1990; Cock,1980). Black women's attempts to find and/or choose between a range of options of employment was constrained by views held by black and white men on what constituted work done by women, and by blacks. Employment in the soft industries very soon came to be perceived as "feminine work spheres" continuous with (restricted) roles assigned to women. Many black women were (and still are) employed as unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. Their conditions of their employment reflect widely held views that as blacks and as women they are innately designed to wash, cook and look after the kids. In the paid labour force unskilled and semi-skilled black women are most often "maids", "tea ladies", office cleaners and factory floor sweepers. Even if skilled career-oriented workers, black women are likely to be employed in the teaching and nursing sectors. Meer (1990) has claimed that 42,4% of all black women work perform "service work [because] serving other people is seen as women's work [and] few men will help with this kind of work" (SACHED,1985,).

The complex interface between race, class and gender power relations is not restricted to black women's paid work. Many black women experience what Cock et al (1983) calls the "double day" (Mies (1986) refers to this as the "double burden") syndrome. The "double day" syndrome experienced by most working black women is not accidental. White's (1991) study of township households in Soweto and Johannesburg showed that in 98% of all cases the burden of housework fell exclusively on women. Men and boys did little or nothing around the house because they either lacked the inclination to do so or accepted the social sanctions against male participation in the "feminine activity" of housework. White reported that neighbours and family members used social sanctions such as mockery, ridicule, anger or social rejection against men who performed "women's work" and who "spoil[t] their wives" (White,1991). Evidently, many black men's attitudes to housework combine certain pre-industrial world views with

accepted classical capitalist definitions of men being true workers and providers while women's labour in the home is regarded as "non-work".

Discussions of black women's class positions then require awareness of not only the class differences between the haves and have-nots but also the subtle differences within the "have-not" class itself. In their 1995 report on poverty, inequality and human development in South Africa, Whiteford, Posel and Kelatwang argue that poverty is a multidimensional condition with many facets. There are they state important and significant differences between households which are poor and those which are impoverished. Whiteford et al (1995) report that the incidence and experience of poverty differs between men and women. Women are more likely than men to be poor and tend to experience this more acutely. This they claim is due to numerous factors such as women's lack of access to waged employment, the nature of employment and women's diminished access to household resources and increased household responsibilities. Whiteford et al report that 48.3% of South African women live below the poverty line with 66.7% and 39.8% of female headed-households in rural and urban areas respectively living in poverty. Figures for South African men living in poverty are 43.5%, with 57.4% and 28.1% of male headed households in rural and urban areas respectively living in poverty.

The risk of poverty is much higher "in those households which are headed by women and which are more dependent on women's earnings, than in those households which are male-headed" (Whiteford et al, 1995, 6). Whiteford et al (1995) also highlight that the level of poverty in a household is related to the education level of the main breadwinners. 68.3% of household heads with no formal education level live in poverty in comparison with 2.2% of university graduated-households. 67% of household heads with junior primary levels of education and 53.8% of household heads with senior primary (standard 2 to 5) education levels are reported to be living in poverty. Households therefore with poorly educated household heads "have a far higher incidence of poverty than those with better educated heads." (1995, p. 8).

Race, class and gender factors in combination with geographical location of the household and the education level of the household head impact on the lives of black women living in South Africa.

5. Some psychological effects of the political and economic strata

Hirschowitz and Orkin (1995) in their study of health inequalities in South Africa, identified various issues which affected the state of mental health of adult (16 years to 64 years) South Africans. 11% of Africans described their emotional state as poor or fair; while adults who were retired or unable to work due to illness or disability adults with lower levels of education who were living in shacks, outbuildings or semi-permanent structures were more likely to describe their mental health as poor or fair (Hirschowitz and Orkin, 1995). Factors such as overcrowding, lack of permanent residence; lack of security; poverty and poor physical health all contributed to the poor psychological health of adult South Africans. 30% of black adults reported that they had major, unsolvable life worries resulting in a sense of powerlessness and difficulty in understanding why this had happened. Clearly the study reinforced findings of the close relationship between poverty and powerlessness. Hirschowitz and Orkin report that females more than male (36% compared with 32%) experienced more than one or a combination of anxiety and depression symptoms such as feelings of isolation; sense of hopelessness about future; lose of interest in general; poor concentration; feelings of irritability; problems in sleeping patterns; sweats or trembles. Gender was found to be closely related to the age of onset of the symptoms of anxiety and depression (above). 31% of young adult women and 44% of older women (50 to 64 years) experienced mood disturbances. The most common traumatic event for black females was reported to be witnessing shacks or houses being burnt (Hirschowitz and Orkin, 1995).

The above reports very clearly highlight the need for the mental health of black women to be understood with reference to socio-economic and political contexts in which they live. Much of the literature and research into the mental health of

women by contemporary feminist psychologists by contrast has tended to ignore differences in race, age, class, sexuality, among others. Caroline Squire has stated that “[feminist psychologists] need to deal seriously with differences between women and the power relations that produce them”. (1989, 70). This lack of contextualisation of the mental health of women and failure to address the psychological effects of poverty or violence on women has meant that frequently feminists’ hold the conviction that changes in purely psychological aspects of perception can improve gender relations and redress inequality in society. The reason for this lack of contextualisation and analysis of the macro-political and macroeconomics in a lot of feminist psychology is the existence of definitions of the object of study as a purely individual psychological entity. This individualism argues Squire is closely related to the formation of the discipline of psychology as a response to physics but modelled on biology (1989).

A significant portion of contemporary feminist psychology has also been strongly based on individualistic socialisation theories which are simplistic and underpinned by fundamentally biological notions of person (see Squire, 1989). Much of this scholarship from the United States and Britain is problematic for understanding the psychological effects of poverty and violence on black women in South Africa. Following Squire it is argued that it is inappropriate because it fails to seriously address issues of power and the context of power struggles in society.

Unger (1988) however like some feminist psychologists are attempting to move away from this individualism towards discussions of the power relations in psychological theorising and psychological well-being. Unger (1988) for example has argued that psychological gender is the outcome of both social (or contextual) and psychological (or process) factors. South African social psychologist Cathy Campbell has addressed this in her studies of identity and the development of an appropriate social psychological of the South African society. Campbell has argued that social identity theory is one theoretical tool which provides South African feminists with some insights into understanding the social order and in

working out strategies of change. Campbell has argued that social identity theory addresses the issue of power in because it focuses on the gendered nature of economic and political power relations in identity construction (see Campbell, 1989; 1994).

The above three sections contained in this chapter have highlighted that South African feminists must have appropriate, up-to-date information on the socio-economic and socio-political contexts in which South African women live and must discuss the variations and differences that exist between men and women, and women themselves. Psychological science can inform these discussions of the psychological effects of these factors by contributing to discussions of what is and should be the most appropriate, efficient and relevant strategy for change.

6. The aims of this study

In this study, a number of aims were identified. Firstly, this thesis is an attempt to contribute to critical discussions of elements required of feminist scholarship in South Africa. A key element which was identified was that of committed intellectual and political concern with the concept of power. Secondly, the concern with power meant that the thesis itself would have to examine critically the economic, political and social dynamics of power at work in the township of Khayamnade, Port Alfred and explore the impacts and consequences of this for women residents. Thirdly, the concern with power and the extended discussion of economic and political factors in a psychological thesis meant that the notion of a psychological science and the contribution of a feminist psychological science had to be revisited. Fourthly, this thesis attempted to provide some critical insights into the power relations at work in the township of Khayamnade, Port Alfred in order to better inform the strategic planning and implementation of development in that community.

It was therefore hypothesised: (1) that women's employment rates, education levels, mobilisation around certain political issues, household poverty levels as well as attitudes to marriage and mothering would reflect a complex, gendered

reality of the power dynamics at work in this township; and (2) that the participants' experiences of these phenomena would differ in ways dependent on their particular age, education level, marital status, employment status and household status.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Overview

Developing a feminist methodology appropriate for understanding the complexities of the South African social order remains a considerable challenge. Various proposals have been offered as solutions, many of them resting on standpoint theory and/or "postmodernist" epistemologies. As Walker has argued experience is not an adequate measurement of the truth of a knowledge claim (1991). In this chapter the elements of what are believed to be an appropriate feminist research methodology are briefly discussed before a description of the participants, data collection and analysis used in this study are offered.

1. Qualitative feminist research

Many feminist psychologists have opted for qualitative research methods in reaction to the positivist criteria constraining a great deal of mainstream psychological explanations. Much has been written about the negative aspects of quantitative psychological research on women (see Squire, 1989; Harding, 1987 and 1991). These criticisms have a great deal of merit but have resulted in an exaggerated caricature of quantitative and qualitative research within a lot of feminist methodological discussions. Schofield, drawing on insights from contemporary researchers, has argued that quantitative research methods have a valid role in feminist research in the sense that the results of such research could have greater and stronger generalizability (1993). Generalizability has been defined in positivist psychology as external validity. With the rejection of positivist philosophy of psychological science, the concept of generalizability was sometimes deliberately ignored by feminist researchers. There is now a growing awareness among contemporary feminist researchers about not only the role of quantitative research but the fact that it can enhance many of the claims being made by feminist researchers (see Jayaratne, 1993; Schofield, 1993).

Henwood and Pigeon (1993) citing Bryman argue that there is a lot of confusion about what "qualitative" research is in contemporary academia. Qualitative research has been described, among other things, as a particular mode of gathering data; work leading to a non-numeric research result; and has been identified more recently with non-positivist epistemologies and the anti-experimental movement. Obviously, this study's underlying critical realist philosophy of science, its feminist epistemology and anti-racist orientation tilt strongly towards qualitative research methods. In this thesis attempts have been made to move away from a number of the following commonly caricatured errors namely, the perpetuation of the view that there is an hiatus between what is erroneously defined as quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, and the cheery rejection of the concept of generalizability of results of research.

The use of qualitative methods in this study aids the overall objective of uncovering the gendered nature of economic and political power relations in women's lives from a particular perspective. Qualitative research facilitates this as it incorporates some key assumptions and tools which are discussed in detail below.

An important aspect of qualitative research is its focus on dialogue (see Squire, 1989; Harding, 1991; Burbank, 1994; Collins, 1989a). The research process thus focuses on the research participants and allows for a great amount of flexibility during the data collection stages. Good qualitative research emphasises the importance of contextualisation within research. Following Bhaskar (1986, 1979), the production of intellectual work within the transitive realm locates it within particular historical contexts. Within this study, the concern with contexts reflects a number of concerns namely Squire's (1989) and Campbell's (1994) charge that feminist psychology fails to examine power relations adequately; Bhaskar's (1979, 1986, 1989) claim of the transitivity of intellectual work, the intention of realist feminists to work for emancipation (see Cain, 1993); and the realist understanding of the complexity of social ordering and hence social scientific research (Bhaskar, 1986).

Qualitative research methodology then is philosophically, epistemologically and politically compatible with psychological research which is critical realist, feminist and anti-racist.

2. Case study method

One of the most common tools used by qualitative researchers is the case study which has been described among other things as "a strategy for doing research which involves empirical investigation of contemporary phenomena within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson,1993,146). The purpose of a constructing a case study may be *exploratory* where it is used in research settings where there "is little to guide what one should be looking for" (Robson,1993,146). Case study method may also be *confirmatory* which allows a researcher to "suggest...an alternative view of phenomena" (Robson,1993, 146). The extent to which this differentiation of exploratory and confirmatory case studies can be

accepted needs to be challenged. Robson's differentiation is over-simplistic. A concern with whether the constructed case study may be more exploratory than confirmatory (or vice versa) and the concern with a proto-classification systems reflects little more than a positivist hang-up.

Some historical notes may add to an understanding of the positivist obsession with certain aspects of case study method. In the first instance it must be remembered that case-study method has been long regarded as the weaker sibling of social science method for non-clinical research (see Yin,1989; Bromley, 1986; Robson,1993). Feminist psychologists in increasing numbers came to favour case study method in their research and have described case studies as a way of challenging the requirements of positivist psychological research and individual oriented methods such as questionnaires which discriminate against women (Squire, 1989). The decision to use case study method highlighted interesting differences between feminist research and strict positivist research within psychology. Case studies which are "always carried out in a context" (Bromley, 1986, 4) and their contextualisation at normative and material levels, challenge the "ahistoricism" of traditional psychology. What this has meant for feminist researchers is that women are defined as real, historical individuals with concrete specific desires and interests (Harding,1987). The fact that case studies embrace rather than deny the context of phenomena (Yin,1984) means that differences in cultures and histories of the women as not seen as "excess baggage". Secondly, the lack of a routinized data collection procedure allows for a level of creativity (Yin,1984; Robson,1993) in the research process. The lack of "rigidity" (Yin, 1984) has proved especially appealing to feminist researchers as it allowed for dialogue and the creation of an arena for emotions, psychic rambling and digressions (Bozzoli,1991) to be included as data.

Although hailed as an appropriate method for feminist research some caution is needed when using this tool. Case study method argues Squire in some psychological research on black women, lesbian women and gay men has reinforced the passivity ascribed to these groups. Squire argues that there is a history of using case studies in psychology (along with observation and descriptive essays) which

distances these marginalised groups from affective action. Caution is needed when asserting the importance of information that emerges from the case study as one needs to be aware of the political implications of one's research.

3. Feminist research and sampling criteria

In her study on aggression and anger in aboriginal communities in Australia, Burbank (1994) argues that meeting the demands of sampling criteria are unnecessary because it is likely that people from the same backgrounds, same community, etceteras will answer the same questions in similar ways. Burbank, like many feminist researchers, reject what they see as "male-biased" research methodological criteria such as sampling procedure. In the rush towards anti-positivist methods a resulting proto-anarchism emerges in much of this research. In this study, it will be argued that anti-positivism does not have to imply poor research. In fact, the study urges that feminists strive to use a healthy hybrid of quantitative and qualitative research methods in their studies.

Such recommendations need to be considered when discussing the issue of sampling criteria in research. A concern for (but not exclusive focus on) sampling criteria does not render feminist research invalid (in the eyes of positivists) or immoral (in the eyes of feminists). This concern provides some guideline for the researcher and others about the generalizability of results of the research. A concern with generalizability does push one into the frenzied positivist trap of (problematically constructed notions) of validity and reliability (see for example Babbie, 1990). Discussions about who participants are, the population from which they were drawn, and how and why they were drawn will not detract from the merits of qualitative research in feminist psychology.

In this study the results of the data collection process are discussed with reference to among others the conditions which mediated the participation of certain women, and which obviously effected the outcome of the results. This may be understood as a healthy concern for sampling procedures which enhances the richness of the study as a whole.

4. Feminist interviewing as data collection

Interviews have been widely and successfully used in both positivist and anti-positivist research. In psychology, positivist interviewing techniques are required to be "not simply a conversation...[but] a specialised pattern of verbal interaction - initiated for a specific purpose, and focused on some specific content areas, with consequent elimination of extraneous material" (Oakley, 1990, 32-3). Positivist interviewing criteria have been seen by feminists as facilitating the manipulation of interviewees as objects of data where researcher must be "friendly but not too friendly" in order to extract information from the "subjects" (Oakley, 1990). The interviewer "cannot merely lose himself in being friendly... He is a professional researcher.. and he must demand and obtain the respect for the task he is trying to perform" (Oakley, 1990, 33-4). Professionalism argue the positivists prevents "bias" from contaminating the study.

In her discussion of a feminist approach to interviewing women, Oakley raises the important issues of exploitation, subjective experiences, and feedback and dialogue. Oakley argues that an exploitative attitude is adopted in viewing interviewees as "sources of data". Feminist interviewing strategies are seen as essential for giving the subjective situations of women greater visibility in society and research. "Interviewing women was, then, a strategy for documenting women's own accounts of their lives" (Oakley, 1990, 48). Feminist interviewing is a research tool which makes possible an articulated and recorded commentary by/of women of the very personal business of being female in society (Oakley, 1990). Oakley argues that refusals to answer research participants' questions or provide personal feedback undermine the interviewees' active participation in the research process. Feminism stresses that within the research process both participants and researcher be active participants and that attitudes and feelings about the interviewing play an important role. In Oakley's (1990) study on pregnant women, the participants claimed "that being interviewed had affected them and the three most common forms this influence took were in leading them to reflect on their experiences more than they would otherwise have done; in reducing the level of their anxiety and/or reassuring them of their normality; and in giving a valuable outlet for the verbalisation of feelings (Oakley,

1990, 50). None of the participants regarded the affect of the interview as "negative" but as "therapeutic" as it allowed them "to get...it out of their system" (Oakley, 1990, 50).

Power relations at micro and macropolitical levels in South Africa are glaringly evident in research contexts such as in this study. Interviewing often assumes interrogative aspects in which interviewees are expected to disclose personal, political and emotional information to a researcher, who is usually white, male, middle class and a stranger, who is often perceived of as a representative of authority. There does exist a possibility for researcher-participant relationships to be exploitative or to appear to carry overtones of possible retribution or disciplinary action from authority figures. Interviewing black women about aspects of their personal lives is no exception to this rule simply because it is labelled as "feminist".

Attempting to negotiate and establish a code of honest disclosure from the researcher, a commitment to ongoing dialogue and to the need for emotions to be incorporated in the dialogue between the research participants can go some way towards this. In addition, there is also a need to be aware of the questions asked, and those not asked, by research participants. The interview should be allowed to be directed, diverted, side-tracked, and halted by the participants.

5. Feminist data analysis

Many feminist psychologists argue Henwood and Pigeon (1993) reject quantitative research methods for ethical, emancipatory and epistemological reasons, and in doing so examine various issues related to choices made during the research process. Henwood et al (1993) cite Bryman's argument that the differences between using quantitative and qualitative methods are technical ones. Bryman argues that in and of themselves methods are not valid but only more or less useful for particular research purposes. Henwood and Pigeon (1993) however tackle Bryman's claims by arguing that there is a danger in minimising the epistemological dimension of his claims. Treating method only as a technical matter they claim risks reverting to a

position where research is evaluated according to classical (positivist) canons of reliability, validity and objectivity.

This concern with reliability, validity and objectivity they claim is true of the tool of content analysis (see Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis is seen as a focus on the "classification of data in ways that maximise the reliability and validity of the coding system, and on facilitating the testing of prior theoretical concerns." (Pigeon and Henowwod, 1993, 17). They argue that it is an example of the narrowest sense of qualitative method dealing with non-numeric data and does "not offer the potential benefits that qualitative methods such as ... discourse analysis open up to psychology." (17-18)

The intention in this section is not to become embroiled in what is a common practice of uncritically promoting discourse analysis - which does have merits for psychological research, feminist or otherwise. Rather an attempt is made to prevent this study from developing arguments which fall into the quagmire of judgemental relativism while still seeking an effective, appropriate means of data analysis.

Jupp and Norris (1993) in their discussion on documentary analysis highlight how interpretative approaches to understanding life histories and documents were steadily replaced in the early 1920's with more positivistic, quantitative content analytic elements such as "communication", "sender/s" and "recipient/s". This they argue is evident in the classic formulation of content analysis as the study of "who says what, to whom, how and with what effect" (Lasswell cited, 38). Positivism dominance in this area was challenged in the late 1960's with the swing towards understanding documents, life histories, social structure, class relations, social control, ideology and power - which was of concern to discourse analysis.

Jupp and Norris cite Holsti's 1969 guidelines to content analysis in their discussions of its problems with its 5 assumptions of: (1) objectivity stresses that each step in the process (such as coding or categorisation) be carried out according to explicit rules. (2) procedures must be systematic; (3) it should have generality which means the findings should have theoretical relevance; (4) content analysis is quantitative and

includes counting frequencies of words; (5) it is concerned with manifest content and surface meaning rather than deeper layers of meaning. The above points are offered by Jupp and Norris' (1993), like Henwood and Pigeon (1993), as reasons for the need for researchers to opt for discourse analytic methods.

It is believed however that Jupp et al and Henwood et al leap rather blindly at the strongly Foucauldian and attractive option of discourse analysis without - as Christopher Norris urges (see Norris, 1992) - a critically examination of the philosophical and political implications of this. It is undeniable that positivism has shaped much of early content analysis and has influenced many of its findings but Jupp et al and Henwood et al again tend to throw out the baby with the bath water. The positivist elements and aspects of content analysis must be questioned and exorcised. There can be no argument about this. But it is erroneous to collapse and identify what is "quantitative" with that of "positivist", or any concern with "theory" as evidence of one's "male bias" (see Collier,1994), and even a concern for "consistency" with agreement with restrictive notions of reliability and validity.

As a method of data analysis, content analysis is simultaneously qualitative (interpretative) and quantitative (numeric) and in combination with the feminist concern with dialogue in the research process it provides some interesting nuances in ones data analysis as it potentially bridges the gap between rich theoretical arena, rigorous analytical procedure, and the raw data of the study.

6. The participants

Before providing information on the participants involved in this research it is necessary to briefly describe the so-called political and social "ticket" upon which access was gained into the Port Alfred community as this affected who was spoken to and what was said. The "political access ticket" which legitimised my presence in the community clearly affected the sampling procedure used in this study and may be understood as a combination of availability and purposive sampling methods (see Babbie,1990).

In June 1992, an Eastern Cape regional activist informed me about certain developments in Port Alfred's townships, its civics' (P.A.R.C.O.) attempts to conduct a community self-survey as a springboard for future appropriate development projects and as a means of appropriately negotiating with the Cape Provincial Administration (CPA.) around the issue of service and rental payments to the municipality. The community claimed they were forced to pay for inadequate and non-existent services. In addition, many of the residents were pensioners and/or unemployed and could not pay for these services. An invitation from the Eastern Cape Development And Funding Forum (ECDAFF.) allowed me to participate in ECDAFF's facilitation of community's self-survey. (Note that the Eastern Cape Development and Funding Forum is based in Grahamstown but is a regional development and funding forum for various communities in the region. The ECDAFF is a non-government organization that adopts participate and empowering training and guidance strategies for communities at grass-roots level, in the process of development and reconstruction of the region.) The terms of this participation allowed me to conduct research on the women in that community as the community struggled with political, social and economic development processes. My study was deemed contiguous with the ECDAFF. initiatives underway in that community.

There were two motivations for my research in Port Alfred, namely my studies and my commitment to feminist politics and scholarship. Studying for a degree by dissertation in research psychology provided me with the opportunity to conscientise myself about feminist research and the more specific claim that South African feminism for the most part has been exclusively for white women. Secondly, my voluntary organisational work in NGO's and service organisations in the Eastern Cape suggested that black African women appeared to be absent from positions of power in most communities but still showed support for (albeit male-dominated) liberation movements.

My research was obviously influenced by the academic requirements set by the university examination board at Rhodes University. These requirements established parameters within which my research had to fall, and although intellectually and emotionally opposed to some of these requirements, I complied with many of the

requirements in order to try to achieve my degree. My study was funded for 2 years by the Centre for Science Development (CSD) of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). It was impossible to engage with the women of the community on a long term basis as financial and time constraints also impacted on my research. Financially, I could only afford to undertake a two year study, which included, the operationalisation of a research proposal acceptable to the university, obtaining access into the community, engaging with the women in the research process, the completion of the theoretical aspects of the thesis and the analysis of the results obtained.

16 women participated in this study. They ranged in age, in education level, in employment status and in place of birth. Participants were interviewed and included as participants in this study if they were resident in the community for the duration of the study, were willing and available to be interviewed by the researcher on several occasions. (A biographical vignette of the 16 participants is provided in Appendix A.) Other participants included an ECDAFF field worker 'N' who was available to translate interviews if deemed necessary by the researcher. 'N' had resided in Port Alfred as a young child and had family in the community. A second participant was 'G', also from the ECDAFF, who offered me the opportunity to be involved in community-based research and development initiatives in the Eastern Cape. 'G' had been an activist leader in Port Alfred during the late 1970's and early 1980's.

7. The data

The "raw" data for this study was provided by (1) data from semi-structured interviews conducted on several occasions with the 16 participants between 1992 and mid 1993 and, (2) a community newspaper (editions June 1993, July 1993, August 1993, September 1993) which provided information on the daily socio-economic situation of Port Alfred's townships and on issues raised by the participants in the study.

Some of the interviewees allowed the researcher to make notes during the interviews, while in other cases some interviews were transcribed from memory as soon as the interview was completed. (Participants were given the right to decide whether notes

could be taken during or after the interview.) The women were interviewed in a number of settings: Older women were interviewed for the most part as a group at a community centre, others were interviewed in their homes. Young and middle-aged women were interviewed in workplaces and homes.

As far as possible interviews were conducted with groups of 2 or 3 participants in an attempt to reduce the chances of the interviews assuming an "interrogation"-style and to enhance the dialogic interaction of and engagement of all participants in the research. These small group interviews were also seen as reinforcing the solidarity of the group of participants as women - an action primary to feminist research.

No standardised interview guide or questionnaire was constructed. All 16 participants interviewees were however asked to discuss some basic issues and were asked to provide personal accounts of the following: (i.) personal life histories which revealed "cultural and psychological myths" rather than 'gobbets' of useful answers to the key questions [of Positivists]" (Bozzoli, 1991, 6). Primary to these accounts was the necessity of providing the women with the opportunity to spontaneously express what and who they were in as informal a research dialogue as possible. (i.i.) a description of some significant life events which for example motivated participation in community based organisations in Port Alfred. Belinda Bozzoli has argued that this allows participants to construct a perspective of township reality with themselves at the centre (1991). (iii.) perceptions of the roles and interests of women in the community. (i.v.) an articulation of social problems and conflicts experienced in the community by women.

Interviews with other participants in the study - 'N' and 'G' - examined issues about Port Alfred community which arose in the interviews with the women. The interviews with 'G' for example provided a different perspective of Port Alfred's community struggles in the 1980's and 1990's.

The case-studies of the women residents were embedded in socio-economic and political information provided by the ECDAFF, Nemato Voice articles and De Villiers (1988) study of Port Alfred community.

8. Data analysis

The first step of the data analysis process included familiarising oneself with the data from the study. This familiarity was made possible by several readings of the notes and transcriptions of the interviews. This provided an excellent opportunity for broad themes and patterns to emerge from the data. Two broad categories of data were identified. Data was classified broadly as either data on the “socio-political” or “socio-economic” aspects of the participants lives.

Within each of the 2 main categories, various sub-categories or sub-themes were identified. These sub-categories reflected specific issues raised by the participants in their discussions of the socio-political and socio-economic realities of their lives in Port Alfred’s townships. Six sub-categories or thematic dimensions were identified (see Chapter 5: Results). For example, in the category “socio-economics”, the participants discussed among others the issue of women’s paid work. Within this theme, gobbets of information on for example, prostitution as alternative income-generation labour performed by women were included.

Data relevant to these thematic sub-categories were combined with participants’ demographic data such as age, education level and employment status. This step allowed one to consolidate and confirm the existence of the patterns that were initially recognised in the first step of the data analysis process.

9. Chapter review

An attempt has be made in this study to construct a methodological framework in which the following considerations could be operationalised: One, that a critical inquiry about particular phenomena (the gendered nature of power relations in black women’s lives) be undertaken. Two, a process of self-reflection by the researcher and (hopefully) by the research participants. Three, a recognition that a concern with power informs a critical, historical analyses of that community and its relation to the wider society. Four, studying the meanings that are ascribed to social interactions by those involved. Five, that normative contexts which include cultural and historical

settings; material contexts in which the participants exist act as a baseline upon which actions and/or interpretations can be imposed and against which the partiality of research questions can be checked. Six, recognition that participants' subjective experiences in the research process with legitimacy and merit and therefore understanding feminist concerns with the discussions about ethics, the necessity of an ethic of caring between research participants, and the central importance of dialogue in research.

Chapter 5:

Results

Overview

As an exercise in the approach articulated and defended in the preceding chapters, interviews were conducted with 16 women living in the townships of Port Alfred during 1992 and 1993. Data from the interviews is captured below in graphic and tabulated formats. Some explanation is offered above each graph or table.

1. Demographic information

The graphs and tables which follow illustrate the age, level of education, marital status, household composition, origin or birthplace and type of employment for the 16 participants interviewed in this study.

1. a. Age

The following figure graphically represents the participants' age as a percentage (%) of the total number of participants. Five age groupings were identified, as detailed in the legend.

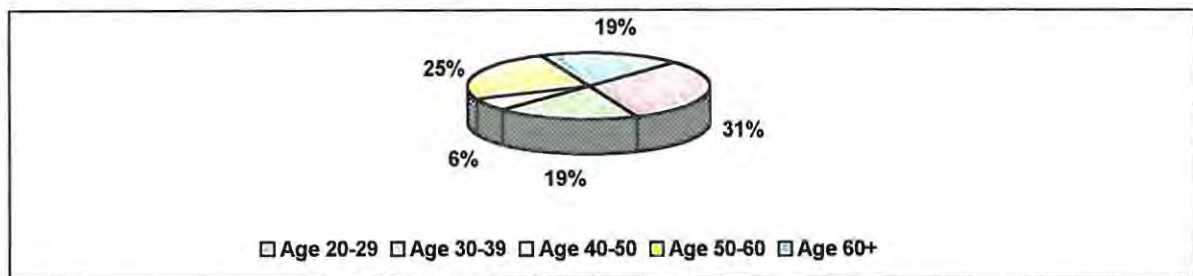


Figure 1: Pie graph showing participants' age as a percentage.

1. b. Education

The following figure graphically represents the participants' level of education as a percentage (%) of the total number of participants. The various levels of education were grouped into five broad categories, as indicated in the legend.

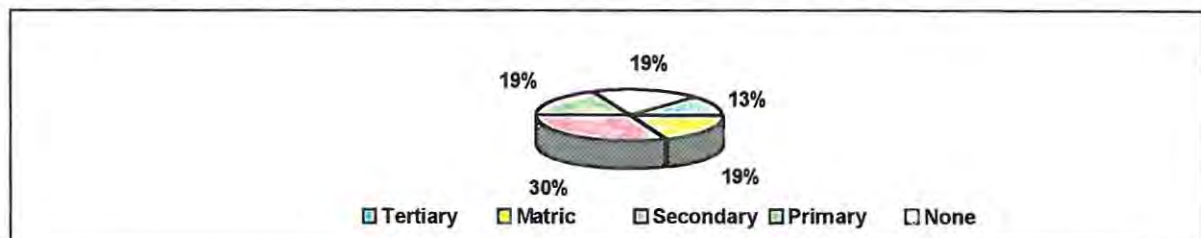


Figure 2: Pie graph showing participants' education levels as a percentage

1. c. Marital status

The following figure (next page) graphically represents the participants' marital status as a percentage (%) of the total number of participants. Four categories of marital

status were identified. "Unknown/other" indicates a case where the participant had been abandoned by her husband, and was consequently unable precisely to state her marital position.

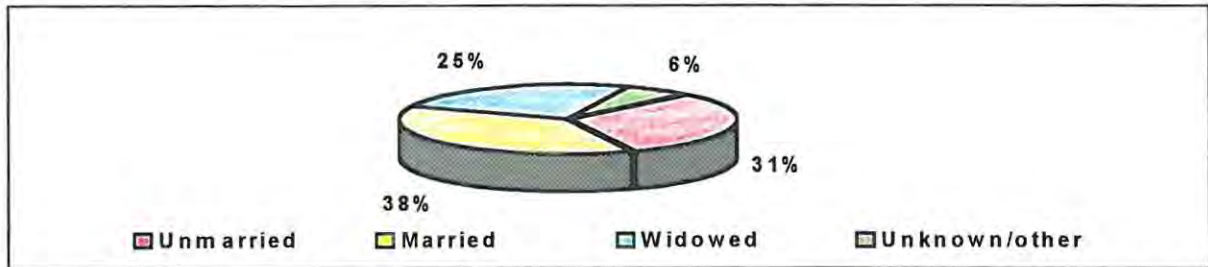


Figure 3: Pie graph showing participants' marital status as a percentage

1. d. Employment status

The following figure graphically represents the participants' employment status as a percentage (%) of the total number of participants. Three employment status groupings were identified. Section 1.g. below contains a more detailed explanation of the data relating to the employment status of the participants.

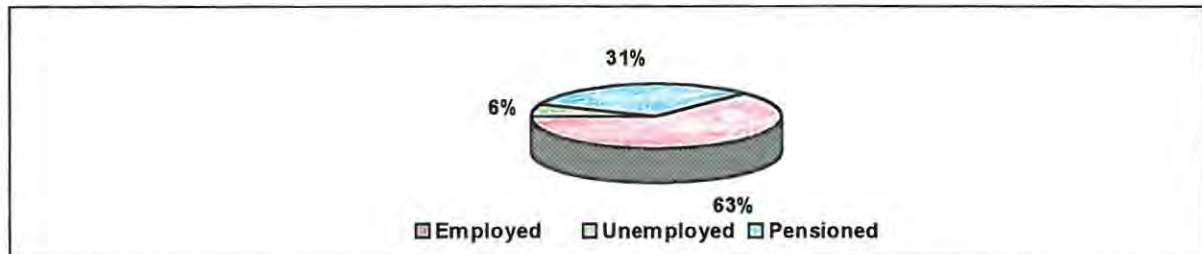


Figure 4: Pie graph showing participants' employment status as a percentage

1. e. Place of birth

The following figure (next page) graphically represents the participants' place of birth as a percentage (%) of the total number of participants. Two groupings of place of birth were identified, namely Port Alfred itself, and "elsewhere". The category "elsewhere" included the areas or towns of Bathurst, Keiskammahoek, Grahamstown and the Amatola Basin.

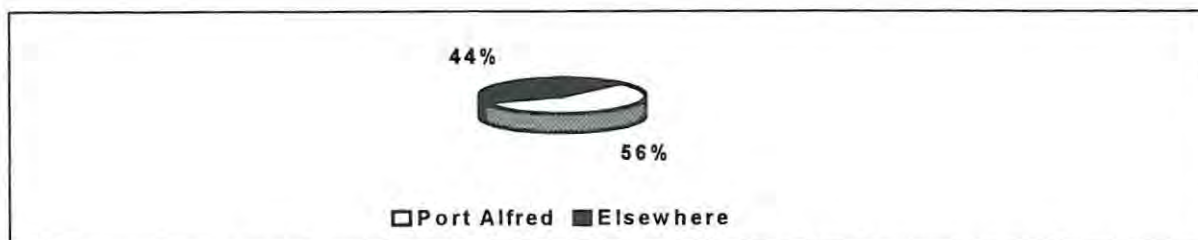


Figure 5: Pie graph showing participants' place of birth status as a percentage

1. f. Head of participants' household

The following figure graphically represents who heads the household in which the participant lives as a percentage (%) of the total number of participants. Three groupings of household composition were identified. Group 1 ("with mother") indicates that the participant lives with her mother in a female headed household. Group 2 ("female") indicates that the participant heads her own household and is the primary breadwinner. Group 3 ("male") indicates that the participant lives in a male headed household (all were headed by husbands) and is a secondary breadwinner.

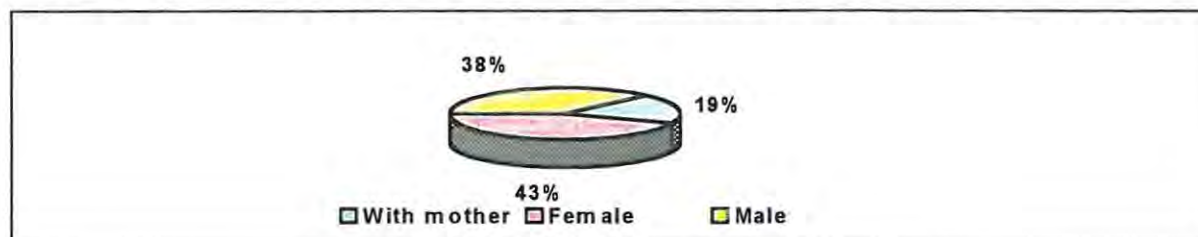


Figure 6: A pie graph showing participants' household composition as a percentage

1. g. Employment type

The following table represents the types of employment of the 16 participants interviewed in this study. It is significant that all 15 (1 participant was not economically active) of the women who were employed at all, were employed in service work. Eight groupings were identified:

- ◇ Grouping 1 ("pensioners") indicated that the participant had retired from the paid labour force but was receiving a pension grant from the state.
- ◇ Grouping 2 ("work with children") indicated that the participant was employed to care for non-school going children, usually in a creche.

- ◇ Grouping 3 (“professional”) indicated that the participant defined her employment as a career. These participants were reporters and a social worker.
- ◇ Grouping 4 (“self-employed”) indicated that the participant owned her own business.
- ◇ Grouping 5 (“secretarial work”) indicated that the participant was either a typist, receptionist or personal assistant performing administrative tasks.
- ◇ Grouping 6 (“domestic work”) indicated that the participant was employed to iron, wash, clean, cook and perform other domestic labour in the home of a private employer.
- ◇ Grouping 7 (“Sales”) indicated that the participant was employed in a retail store as a salesperson.
- ◇ Grouping 8 (“not economically active”) indicated that the participant did not participate in the paid employment sector of the economy.

The data about employment is cross referenced with data concerning the basic categories of age, education, marital status and headship of household which is detailed above.

Employment Type	Frequency as Number/16 and (%)	Age (See Fig 1) (1,2,3,4,5)	Education (See Fig 2) (1,2,3,4,5)	Marital Status (See fig 3) (1,2,3,4)	Household head. (Fig 4) (1,2,3)
Pensioner	5 (31.25%)	3 x Grp 5 2 x Grp 4	3 x Grp 4 2 x Grp 5	4 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	5 x Grp 2
Work with children	3 (18.75%)	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
Professional	3 (18.75%)	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 1	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
Self-employed	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
Secretarial work	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
Domestic work	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
Sales	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
Not economically active	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3

Table 1: Table showing the types of employment of the participants as a percentage

2. Data from interviews

Several Interviews were conducted with each of the participants between 1992 and mid 1993. The data which emerged from the interviews were collated into broad thematic groupings. This data is summarised in tabulated format below in no particular order.

2. a. Theme one: Community life and community development

The next table (following page) illustrates the various issues identified by the participants when interviewed about community life and community development. The issues raised indicate what participants believed to be the causes of the lack of development in their community and the major issues and problems faced by the community during the period in question. This data is cross-correlated with information about the age, education, marital status and household headship, as discussed above.

Issue identified:	Frequency as Number/16 and (%)	Age (See Fig 1) (1,2,3,4,5)	Education (See Fig 2) (1,2,3,4,5)	Marital Status (Fig 3) (1,2,3,4)	Head of Household (Fig 4) (1,2,3)
poverty, no money	13 (81.25%)	3 x Grp 1 3 x Grp 2 4 x Grp 4 3 x Grp 5	2 x Grp 2 5 x Grp 3 3 x Grp 4 3 x Grp 5	3 x Grp 1 5 x Grp 2 4 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 7 x Grp 2 5 x Grp 3
unemployment, no work	6 (37.5%)	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4 2 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 3 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 3 x Grp 3
lack of skills and education	4 (25%)	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 2
farm minds, "backward"	3 (18.75%)	3 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2	3 x Grp 1	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2
rape	3 (18.75%)	3 x Grp 1	2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	3 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2
violence and crime	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
no health services	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
no houses, squatters	2 (12.5%)	2 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 1	2 x Grp 2
teenage pregnancy	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
no electricity	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
disrespectful children	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
widespread racism	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
high migration levels	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
high illiteracy rate	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
no "ubuntu", weak leaders	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
no control of life	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
lack of community unity	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
too many shebeens	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3

Table 2: Table showing the issues raised by participants as a percentage (%) for theme one

2. b. Theme two: Women, mothers and motherhood

The following table illustrates the various issues identified by the participants when interviewed about women's roles as mothers and the issue of motherhood. The issues raised address what participants believe to be the main components of motherhood, the roles of good mothers in the community, the problems faced by mothers and the problems caused by bad mothering.

Identified issue as	Frequency Number and (%)	Age (1,2,3,4,5)	Education (1,2,3,4,5)	Marital Status (1,2,3,4)	Household Relationship (1,2,3)
mothers must stress the importance of education	7 (43.75%)	2 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3 2 x Grp 5	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	2 x Grp 1 3 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 3 x Grp 3
more teenage pregnancies (girls who aren't "mothers" are having babies)	6 (37.5%)	2 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 3 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 1 4 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 1 4 x Grp 3
motherhood means poverty	4 (25%)	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3
no support for working mothers	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 5	2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
mothers are protectors	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
mothers don't teach discipline and control	2 (12.5%)	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
more single mothers	2 (12.5%)	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
mothers must teach sex education to daughters	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
mothers teach children to challenge social wrongs	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
mothers are emotional and financial support for daughters	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
conflict between mothers and daughters	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2
mothers must be respected	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
mothers lack maternity benefits	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
mothers must care for the home	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3

Table 3: Issues raised by participants as a percentage (%) for theme two.

2. c. Theme three: Women and work

The following table illustrates the various issues identified by the participants when interviewed about women, work and the issue of women's economic realities. The issues raised address what participants believe to be the employment and career options available to women, the consequences of unemployment for women, the importance of education in employment, the tension between traditional views of women's work and the need for women to work, domestic work, and approved and scorned alternative ways of earning an income.

Identified issue as:	Frequency	Age (1,2,3,4,5)	Education (1,2,3,4,5)	Marital Status (1,2,3,4)	Household head (1,2,3)
most women are domestic workers	5 (31.25%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4 2 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 3 3 x Grp 2
traditional views of women's work are still popular	5 (31.25%)	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2 3 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	3 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3
women are beadworkers, seamstresses, work with hands	4 (25%)	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 2
gardening as women's alternative income	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2
housework as different from paid work	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 4 2 x Grp 5	2 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 3 2 x Grp 2
girls most often want to be teachers	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
girls who don't go to school, can't work and end up pregnant	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
no work for women	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
prostitution as women's alternative income	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
no education means no work	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
tension between tradition and class	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
women are not professionals	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
no difference between women and men's work	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2

Table 4: Table showing the issues raised by participants as a percentage (%) for theme three

2. d. Theme four: Women and development initiatives

The following table illustrates the various issues identified by the participants when interviewed about the development initiatives in the community with specific reference to projects labelled “women’s development projects”. The issues raised address what participants believe to be the causes of the lack of development in their community, knowledge of various projects in the community, and why the participants were/not involved in these projects.

Identified issue as:	Frequency (%)	Age (1,2,3,4,5)	Education (1,2,3,4,5)	Marital Status (1,2,3,4,)	Household relationship (1,2,3)
aware of projects in community	10 (62.5%)	4 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3 2 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	2 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 4 x Grp 3 2 x Grp 4	4 x Grp 1 5 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 1 3 x Grp 2 5 x Grp 3
poverty is too immense for development	5 (31.25%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3	3 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3
underdeveloped because there are no skills	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
LODAFF as ineffective	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 3
underdeveloped because community is “backward”/traditional	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3
schism between leaders and grassroots people	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
no community unity	2 (12.5%)	2 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
projects fail to teach skills to all	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
township is a squatter camp	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
dependency is too high	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
women are too tired to be involved in development	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3

Table 5: Table showing the issues raised by participants as a percentage (%) for theme four

2. e. Theme five: Women, marriage, lobola, tradition

The following table illustrates the various issues identified by the participants when interviewed about the issue of women and traditionalism with special referene to marriage and lobola. The issues raised address what particiants believe to be true of married women, necessary for a healthy marriage, their understanding of lobola practices, and the problems they face in their own marriages.

Issue identified as:	Frequency Number and (%)	Age (1,2,3,4,5)	Education (1,2,3,4,5)	Marital Status (1,2,3,4)	Household Relationship (1,2,3)
marital conflict due to no money	6 (37.5%)	4 x Grp 3 2 x Grp 4	4 x Grp 3 2 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 4 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	5 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3
lobola as backward	4 (7%)	4 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	4 x Grp 1	3 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3
marriage is rare in the 1990's	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
marriage indicates that woman is "backward" or traditional	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
marriage lets women be mothers	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
lobola as different for ordinary women	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
good women respect their husbands	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
marriage allows dual income to prevent poverty	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 2

Table 6: Table showing the issues raised by participants as a percentage (%) for theme five

2. f. Theme six: Women and politics

The final table (following page) illustrates the various issues identified by the participants when interviewed about the issue of women and politics with special reference to the issue of women's politics. The issues raised address what participants believe to be the appropriate issues for which women can be politicised, the lack of politicisation among professional women, the marginalisation of women (especially young women), the difference between women and men's political struggles, feminism, leadership problems and the arenas in which politicisation develops.

Issue identified as	Frequency as Number and (%)	Age (1,2,3,4,5)	Education (1,2,3,4,5)	Marital Status (1,2,3,4)	Household headship (1,2,3)
fighting unemployment is main political issue in P.A.	6 (37.5%)	2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 4 2 x Grp 5	3 x Grp 3 3 x Grp 5	3 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	3 x Grp 2 3 x Grp 3
racism is main political issue in pa	5 (31.25%)	2 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	2 x Grp 1 3 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 1 3 x Grp 3
P.A. politics is about bread-and-butter issues	3 (18.75%)	1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4 1 x Grp 5	1 x Grp 1 2 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 2 2 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 3 2 x Grp 2
leadership problems are rife in P.A.	2 (12.5%)	1 x Grp 3 1 x Grp 4	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 2	2 x Grp 3
women and men together can build unity	2 (12.5%)	2 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 1	2 x Grp 2
women are more visible in 1990's politics	2 (12.5%)	2 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 2 1 x Grp 3	2 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1 1 x Grp 2
ANCWL is only for older women	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 1
young women have no role to play	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
women's issues are not feminist issues	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
feminism divides men and women	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
ANCYL is only for young men	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
men still fight "hard" politics	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2
children are politicised at school by peers	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
PAWO in 1980's	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
professional women aren't politicised	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3
ANC politics is too abstract	1 (6.25%)	1 x Grp 3	1 x Grp 1	1 x Grp 2	1 x Grp 3

Table 7: Table showing the issues raised by participants as a percentage (%) for theme six

Chapter 6:

Discussion

Overview

This chapter critically examines the data emerging from the interviews with the 16 participants in light of the claims made in earlier chapters. Some conclusions are drawn and an attempt is made at identifying and evaluating the study's potential strengths and weaknesses..

6.1 Preliminary Observations

Feminist scholarship, claims Walker (1991), is always focused on reality, is by nature critical, and has specific goals of challenging and changing the status quo in society. Academic feminism is central to this. It produces knowledge providing insights into the workings of society, the mechanisms which oppress women, and thus provides strategies for changing this. This thesis has argued that the feminist emphasis of a focus on reality necessitates the adoption of a critical realist perspective of science. Critical realism sharpens and strengthens feminism as category of social analysis, and has positive implications for feminism as social movement.

In this chapter, the data which emerged from the interviews with the 16 participants from Khayamnande and Nelson Mandela townships in Port Alfred was examined from a critical realist and feminist perspective in an attempt to do the following: (a) focus on the realities of the lives of the 16 women; (b) critically examine the power dynamics at work in the creation of those realities; and (c) where applicable challenging the status quo within that community.

This chapter begins with a description of the women participants in this study, highlighting interesting socio-demographic data that formed the basis for discussions of the participants' responses to questions about their community and their lives. This chapter explores the main themes of (a) community life and community development; (b) women, womanhood and motherhood; (c) women and work; (d) women and development initiatives; (e) women, marriage, lobola and tradition or customs; and (f) women and politics in Port Alfred in the early 1990's emerging from the data in light of the socio-demographic data of the participants and of the literature reviewed in earlier chapters of this thesis. This chapter will then provide some discussion of the strengths and weaknesses the study and its claims before a summary and conclusion is drawn.

6.2. Socio-demographics of the participants

The 16 women participants in this study can be considered as a group in that they shared the experience of participating in a study conducted in the early 1990's on women living in an impoverished township in the Eastern Cape. Aside from this, some of the women shared certain demographic phenomena such as age or education level or marital status. These demographic phenomena were however also points of possible difference between the women participants. A brief description of these results will be used to illustrate what sub-groupings could be extracted from the data provided by the participants. These were identified as age group, education level, marital status, employment status and household composition.

In the first sub-grouping, age was found to be an interesting factor which affected the women's specific experiences of township life. 31% of the women were aged between 20 and 29 years; 25% were between 30 and 49 years; and 44% were between the age of 50 and 66 years: The age of the participant with only one exception (Khanyi, a 40 year old social worker) was found to be a fair predictor of the participants' educational level, employment status, marital status and household composition: the younger the participant, the more likely she was to have higher levels of education, to be unmarried, and employed.

In terms of education level, 4 out of the 5 women in their twenties were in possession of matric certificates. Only 1 of the remaining 10 older participants - namely Khanyi, a 40 year old social worker - had been formally educated beyond standard 8. Of the 30% of participants with secondary level education (defined as above standard 6 but below matriculation level), 1 was in her late twenties (the oldest of this group), 3 were in their thirties and 1 was 50 years of age. Of the 19% of participants with primary levels of education (defined as between class 1 and standard 5), 2 were in their fifties and 1 in her sixties. This pattern is reversed for 19% of participants with no formal education: 1 was in her fifties and 2 in their sixties.

What was suggested was that educational opportunities for women have increased over the last half century in Port Alfred. Young girls have slightly increased opportunities to complete their schooling than before. Of the women who reported that they had either not completed their schooling or not attended school at all, mention was made of the fact that they were born in underdeveloped areas. Siphokasi for example was born in the rural district of the Amatola Basin in the late 1920's. According to her, "there was no school in my village so I did not go to school". Nombulelo who was born in Port Alfred in 1934 explained that "when Port Alfred was still a small town [with] ... only one school here ... I went to school up until standard one ... because my mother needed help in the house." The issue of women and education will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In terms of marital status, all of the 31% of participants who were not married were in their twenties. Of the 38% of participants who were married, 3 were in their thirties, 1 in her forties and 2 in their fifties. Of the remaining 6 participants who were widowed or who did not know the whereabouts of their husbands, all were over the age of 50. The participants in their thirties (and the one participant in her fifties) reported that they had been married in their twenties. The other women in their fifties and sixties reported that they had been married in their teens.

These trends suggested that younger women in their twenties in Port Alfred were not getting married as frequently or as early as their mothers or grandmothers. The various explanations which were offered for this are discussed in greater detail in section 2 of this chapter.

Three employment statuses were identified namely "employed", "unemployed" and "pensioned". The former referred to women who are employed in the formal paid labour sector of the economy. Those who did not participate in the paid labour force were defined as "unemployed". Those women receiving either a state or private pension were termed pensioners. Pensioners were however considered as "unemployed" despite their varied attempts to generate income in the non-formal employment setting to support their households. In this study, 63% of the participants were employed. All employed

participants were younger than 50 years of age. 37% of participants who were not formally employed were all older than 55. In 1988 De Villiers reported that the township's employment rate was about 38%. The employment rate of the women in this study is obviously not a representative reflection of the unemployment situation in the township for women and men. In addition, of the participants who were employed only

Two participants were primary breadwinners, heading their own households, and both were in their mid to late twenties. The remaining 8 employed participants fell into 2 other categories namely (1) employed but living in their mothers' house (3 participants in their early twenties) and (2) employed but living in a house headed by their husbands. Their income was viewed as secondary to their husbands (3 participants in their thirties, 1 in her forties and 1 in her fifties). All of the pensioners headed their own households. This meant that they were responsible for securing the economic livelihood of the household through non-formal labour such as gardening or sewing. Only 1 participant in this study was not formally employed but still head of her household. This was possible because she relied on her daughters to perform the domestic work in her household and financially support her.

What this information provides is a realistic portrayal of the economic hardships faced by especially those women, who head their own households, who are not formally employed, who receive a (pathetic) pension grant and who must still find some way of preventing the economic (and social) collapse of their household.

In terms of who headed the household in which the participants lived (referred to as household composition), it was found that 38% of participants resided in male-headed households. In all instances the male head was the participants' spouse. The remaining 62% of the participants resided in female-headed households. Of this group, 70% headed their own households while the remaining 30% lived with their mothers. This is congruent with reports that township households are commonly headed by women (see de Villiers, 1988; Meer, 1990). The issue of female-headed households will be discussed in greater detail in section 2 of this chapter.

In addition to the above, the results clearly indicated that women's experience of paid and unpaid work reveals a set of complex power relations at work. The type of work which women perform provides interesting insights into this. It is of great significance that 100% of the formally employed participants worked in service type employment or following Meer (1990) Barrett et al (1985) and Cock (1980) that viewed as women's work because it is deemed continuous with restricted social and psychological roles assigned to women. The participants in this study were employed as child minders, nurturers of community welfare, domestic workers, sales assistants, cooks. Even in the case of the two reporters (albeit long viewed as a male enclave), they will still perform a service - news reporting - to their community. Of the participants who were not formally employed, the 5 pensioners performed income generating labour which could still be deemed acceptable for women: managing vegetable gardens or sewing for old men in the community.

In terms of domestic work, all 16 of the participants performed unpaid domestic work in the households in which they lived. The degree of involvement in the domestic work performed in the house was found to be dependent on the participants' employment status, marital status and age. Young women living with their mothers reported that they cooked regularly and ironed clothing when they returned home. Young women who headed their own households had younger sisters to assist them but they were still responsible for general cleaning, washing, ironing and caring for young children in the household. Married women reported that they assumed sole responsibility for domestic work in their homes. None reported any assistance from their husbands. Older women who headed their own homes had daughters or granddaughters living in their households who assumed a large degree of responsibility for cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing in the house. In none of the interviews was any expectation placed on boys or men to assist the women with domestic work. Again, this is similar to the findings of among others White (1991). This suggests that the vast burden of the socio-economic reproduction of the labour force falls firmly on women's shoulders.

Finally, the socio-demographic data from the interviews revealed that 56% of the women were born in Port Alfred and 44% were born elsewhere. Of the latter group, 2 women were born in urban or peri-urban centres namely Fort Beaufort and Grahamstown. The other (5) women were born in villages or farms in the rural areas of the Amatola Basin, the Keiskammahoek and in 2 instances, on a white-owned farm just outside Bathurst.

6.3. Themes emerging from the data

Several interviews were conducted with each of the 16 participants during the course of the data collection phase of this study. A vast amount of data was generated by each participant with some more than others providing great detail on certain topics. It has been difficult and challenging to extract this information from the interview transcriptions because in many instances information (on for example community development initiatives) was repeated with varying degrees of reliability in later discussions. Participants were also more likely to be consistent about what they had said in earlier interviews if they had been interviewed alone. The older participants who had been interviewed as a group, claimed responsibility in later interviews for an interesting point or issue which was not initially raised by them. In these instances, an attempt has been made to identify what points were first raised by which participants. It is however quite positive because it implies that participants did discuss and think about the issues after the interviews and that an important aim of feminist research - namely dialogue - had been achieved.

Returning to the data, 2 broad categories of data emerged from the interviews with the 16 participants. The broad categories were labelled "socio-economic" and "socio-political" data. Within these 2 categories, 6 themes were identified which captured the participants discussion of issues and experiences they faced as women township residents. All of the themes incorporated implicitly or explicitly the social, political and economic power relations operating in the township. No attempt was been made to construct a simple table which could clearly indicate which themes were socio-economic and which socio-political. Rather the themes were viewed as falling at various points between the two "poles" of socio-economic and socio-political power relations in Port

Alfred. Theme three (women and work) for example was more likely to fall closer to the socio-economic “pole” than would theme six (women and politics). Both are viewed as incorporating elements of the other. The six themes which emerged from the interview data were: (1) community life and community development; (2) women, mothers and motherhood; (3) women and work; (4) women and development initiatives; (5) women, marriage, lobola and traditions; and (6) women and politics. Each of these themes are discussed in detail below and reference is made to the socio-demographic data discussed in section 1 of this chapter.

3.a. Theme one: community life and community development

Participants were asked to discuss and describe their community, the problems faced by the community and the issue of development within and of the community. The participants listed a number of issues or problems. The ordering of the issues and problems raised was dependent on how many of the participants listed it as such (see table 2 in Chapter 4: Results).

Poverty and a lack of money unsurprisingly was most often used to describe the community of Port Alfred. 81.25% of participants rated this as the most important issue. 54% of the participants who described this as the most common description and problem of their community were women who headed their own households. In section 1 of this chapter it was suggested that most of these women were over the age of 55 years, pensioned, widowed, with little or no formal education.

46,2% of participants listed unemployment or the lack of work as the second most common description of and problem facing their community. This topic was found to be closely linked to the first issue and both together can be viewed as evidence of a class power relationship. Women of different ages, marital status, education level and household composition commonly discussed the issue of unemployment in the township. This suggests that unemployment rates are widely discussed in the community as a whole as they affect all women in that community either directly (such

as young women seeking employment) or indirectly (older women who must support their daughters who cannot find employment).

25% of participants rated the lack of skills and formal education as the third most common description and problem of their community. The concern about the lack of skills among Port Alfred residents was commonly expressed by women in their thirties who were married with children and who themselves had secondary levels of education. This suggests that these women expressed a concern about the welfare and future of their young children living in a clearly impoverished community, which they believed would always remain that way. This issue reappeared in several interviews. Most often it was discussed in relation to the concept of good mothering. Good mothering involved mothers teaching their children about the importance of education so that they could escape both poverty and the township.

18.75% of participants listed the following issues as the fourth most common description and problem in their community: "farm-minds"; rape; violence and crime; and a lack of health services. Each will be discussed in some detail.

"Farm-minds" was a term used by 20 year old Nita to describe her perception of the community as conservative and traditional and accepting of notions of womanhood based on traditional Xhosa world views. 100% of respondents who identified this as a problem in the community were in their twenties. They were also better educated and unmarried. The data suggests that these women were pressurised by parents and other community members to conform to roles of womanhood (implying heterosexual marriage and motherhood) that constrained their psychological and economic independence. Winnie for example claimed that "most women in Port Alfred who are married are unemployed. Only very backward women are getting married [today]."

The issue of rape was similarly only mentioned by young women who were unmarried, who lived with their mothers or headed their own homes and who had higher levels of education. The interviews indicated that there was a sexist element to violence in the township which is alarming in light of the young women's struggle for control over their

own lives and independence. The threat of rape was reported to be used by the community as a means of sanctioning young women's behaviour and independence. Men were seen as using the threat of rape as an expression of male power over women who were becoming more independent. Grandmothers and mothers' use of the threat of rape also suggests that it is a psychological tool used to constrain their daughters independence and desire to not get married.

Rape and other forms of violence were discussed at length by some participants. Beko for example claimed that "rape is a very big problem. If you are a lady you can't go up and down the street after 8.30 or 9 but the police don't care about this. They don't care about us. The problem with the rapists is the police. Nothing is being done about it. Three months ago an old woman died because of rape ... The case is still continuing." Leleti reported that women living in the "squatter camp" were more susceptible to rape than women in the formal township. Participants claimed that the incidence of rape in the community was not seen as any different from any other township in Alexandria, Kenton or Grahamstown. Thembi, a woman in her late twenties discussed the issue of rape, violence and crime in her interview but stressed that rape and stabbing "are problems which affect the whole community."

The participants often explained that crime and violence in the community were related to the lack of employment and widespread poverty. When asked to explain why rape existed in the community, several participants indicated that the women themselves were responsible for this. Leleti for example stated that "there is no entertainment and nothing for people to do so they hang around and get into trouble." Nita stated that "rape happens to young girls when they get drunk and they are singing in the streets. Then the rapist sees them and thinks 'there is a target'. And then they are raped. Also there is harassment from the boys. They [boys] ask for sex and touch them and when the girls say 'no' then there is rape." The issue of rape and sexual harassment was more likely to be explained as due to the conduct of the "victim" rather than the rapist. There is very little evidence of awareness of the politics of rape and sexual harassment in the schools and organisations within the community. And, as was mentioned by Leleti, no service or

organisation such as Rape Crisis exists to assist rape survivors or promote awareness of the issue to the community.

The lack of health services in the community was also identified as a problem faced by the community. Nombulelo mentioned that there was no hospital in the community. This meant that township residents had to travel great distances to the nearest hospital. Even a trip to the clinic however was also un-affordable to most impoverished households. Leleti stated that on average a visits to the clinic which was charged at a rate of R4 a consultation was out of the reach of most township residents. Township residents were reported to be increasingly desperate and angry with the poor health facilities available in their community. Mama T for example reported that a hospital would be built near to the Kowie River but were later informed that the proposed hospital was a psychiatric institution. "We have nothing here" claimed Mama T, "the clinics are too few",

Issues rated by participants as the fifth most common problem facing their community included the lack of appropriate housing and subsequent growth of informal homes or shacks; teenage pregnancy; the lack of electricity; disrespectful children and widespread racism in the town. The issues of teenage pregnancy and disrespectful children is discussed in greater detail in the theme 2 (women, mothers and motherhood) and is therefore only briefly mentioned here. The issue of the lack of housing and growth of the informal settlement on the hills around the township was discussed by several participants on several occasions. The township was often referred to by participants as a "squatter settlement" because people had tried to build homes without money and has used what they could. Winnie for example referred to the township as a squatter camp and called it "ugly" when compared with the Halliards (a local tourist attraction in "white" Port Alfred). It must be noted that most of the residents in the informal settlement were women who fled the rural areas and violence-torn regions of the former Ciskei and Transkei.

The electrification of the township was also discussed by several participants. Phyllis for example reported that there was no electricity in her township. She was frustrated by this especially in light of the fact that people residing in "mud huts" in Bathurst (a small

semi-rural community 20 km from Port Alfred) had electricity. She identified the reason for the lack of electrification in the township as that of a lack of community unity: "In Bathurst the people are together. The people [here] are not together. Some are doing this and some are doing that. The people are suffering." Leleti reported that there had been negotiations between the civic and ESKOM, and the installations were supposed to start in April (1993) but "the violence after [Chris] Hani's death kept their vans away."

Older women rather than younger participants in the study most often discussed the issue of widespread racism in the town of Port Alfred. Mama T regularly discussed in detail what she perceived to be the racism of white Port Alfred residents and the white-dominated municipality. She stated that the Afrikaans Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) enjoyed support from the white residents in Port Alfred and Kenton-on-Sea. This issue is discussed in detail in theme 6. It was however evident that political struggles by the community have long been a struggle against racism within the town and the police force. This appeared to still be the case in the 1990's.

Various participants listed other issues such as high migration levels and illiteracy rates, a lack of "ubuntu" as value system in the community, a lack of control over one's own life and the presence of numerous shebeens as additional problems faced by the community.

In general however the participants of the study identified economic issues as the major problems experienced by specifically the women of township. There was strong evidence to suggest that women in the township were more likely to be politicised around class issues and issues of underdevelopment and exploitation.

3.b. Theme two: Women, mothers and motherhood

Discussions of motherhood as a component of womanhood, as well as participants' perceptions of what constituted good and bad mothering strategies were combined to form this theme on women, mothers and motherhood.

The notion of the good mother as a woman who stresses the importance of education to her children was most often mentioned by participants (43.75%). Of those who mentioned this issue, no significant difference exists in their age, education level, marital status or household composition. This suggests that education has long been identified as a means of empowering children and communities, and as a means of escaping poverty. Jean for example reported that she was the oldest child in a family of four. Her brother was studying at Rhodes University and her two sisters were studying at the University of the Western Cape and Port Elizabeth respectively. Jean however “only went to standard 8” and she stated that “you can’t do anything with that.” Her mother sent 3 of her children to university without any financial capital or the assistance of her husband in spite of having no formal education herself. Mothers claimed Jean needed to educate their daughters about two important issues: “Mothers must educate the girls about sex [because] too many young girls are having sex with lots of boys [and] then they fall pregnant ...The second thing is that mothers must teach young girls about education. Education is very important. They must be taught that education is about their future.”

This view was echoed by nearly every participants at some stage during the course of the interviews conducted with them. The need to stress the importance of education was defined as central to good mothering. A woman with tertiary-educated children was herself deemed worthy of respect because she appeared to have carried out her duties as a mother to great effect. The women in this study who were mothers were very eager to report details of their children’s educational qualifications and achievements. Education was perceived as the elixir which solved and prevented almost every possible problem, from poverty and teenage pregnancy to employment opportunities and better bride wealth or lobola contracts. Only one participant, namely Beko was sceptical about this because according to her “after the [1994 multi-party] elections lots more people will have a standard ten but they won’t be able to get bursaries or money to study further. They won’t be able to get jobs!”

The issue of teenage pregnancy was often discussed at length by participants of various ages, education levels, marital status's and household compositions. Teenage pregnancy was seen as the single largest problem faced by young girls in the community. Teenage girls who fell pregnant because of (unprotected) premarital sex were very clearly not defined as "mothers". They were defined as "immoral", "stupid", only interested in sex, and their pregnancies resulted from attempts to "catch" boys' attention. Teenage girls who had children were not perceived of as mothers and the term "mothers" was not used in the course of any of the participants discussions of this group of teenagers. "Mother" was a term which participants used to refer to a woman who had had children in a marital context. Scorn and contempt existed for the young mother of a child born outside of wedlock, and for the child itself.

The participants were also quite clear about the effects that teenage pregnancy had on the social identity of the teenager, the possibility of continuing her education and on her class position. Nita for example stated "that some of the babies do not even have fathers. The guys say 'no, that is not my baby', so what can she do? There is a lack of support for these young girls. Some fathers are still at school. *She* must leave school and take care of the child." Winnie claimed that the support which some of the girls received was counter-productive. This meant that they never fully comprehended the harsh reality of being a thirteen year old mother: "Young girls are leaving their children with the grandmothers. Then the child gets spoilt. If the child does not want to go to school, then the granny says 'no, you don't have to go to school' [but] ... there is also another thing. Grandmothers want people to think that the child is hers because her daughter is 12 years old and has a child. They are wrong in doing this because the young girl will think she can have another baby. She has not felt anything. She has not felt the pain of bringing up the baby."

The incidence of teenage pregnancy according to the participants appeared to be on the increase in the community. The participants claimed that these teenage mothers were often between the ages of 12 and 14 years. Whatever the reasons offered by participants for teenage sexual activity - from immorality to a lack of respect for

traditional Xhosa codes of conduct - it was clear from the interviews that many teenage girls in the community were engaged in sex from puberty or earlier. There appeared to be a lack of sex educational programmes at schools. The younger participants reported that an awareness of sex, sexuality and "safe" sex is taught mostly by the teenager's peers and not by the mothers or care givers. The township has witnessed a decline in the mean age of mothers and a decline in their education levels and class positions. The likelihood of more female headed homes headed by teenage mothers with little or no prospects for employment due to a lack of appropriate skills has increased.

Returning to the notion of motherhood, many of the participants equated motherhood with a particular economic reality namely poverty. This was not surprising. Nozipho, like many other participants, reported that there were more single mothers in the community facing huge difficulties in ensuring the material and psychological survival of their families. The tension between traditional codes of conduct for and the economic realities of the township affected women in a particularly harsh way. "It is our tradition" stated Jean who was married with children, "that if a woman has children she must stay at home and look after the children until the children can go to school or to pre-school. But there is no money in the lives of our people. Women need to earn money. They must go to work. There is nothing we can do about this." She stated that mothers who lacked support from their husbands and maternity benefits from employers "are working right up until they are 9 months pregnant because they need the money." Similarly the oldest participant in the study, reported that "women who live by themselves with no husbands are the most poor. This makes it difficult for them to live." Zoleka stated that she has to support her own daughters and their 6 children, and it was quite a common for the family not to eat every day.

Mothers with daughters in their teens and twenties had an enormous task of attempting to break this cycle of poverty by using the limited resources. These resources or tools included a range of sometimes contradictory socio-cultural and socio-psychological strategies. Firstly, mothers often appealed to their children and others for respect by casting themselves as social beings deserving of respect because of their suffering,

sacrifice and strength. As an appeal it was based on a contradictory mix of perceptions of women as mothers - as defined by traditional world views - and as super strong - as defined in liberation political literature. This is not however unproblematic. Women reported in increasing numbers that this resource was being whittled away by children who did not respect or obey their mothers but who turned to their peer group as socialising agents. Secondly, women often used the resource of teaching about the need for education (a well documented resource in African American women's writing) as a way of facilitating their child's escape from poverty. Again this is not unproblematic. Unemployment rates have increased and there appears to be no guarantee that tertiary education equals either employment or "escape" from poverty.

Mothers were faced with huge challenges and difficulties to not only provide their children with financial support but to ensure their psychological well-being. It was evident that for those women who were socially expected to ensure that their children's futures were "better" than their own lives, it was at least anxiety-provoking and at most, nearly impossible. Participants often reported that mothers in the community were caught in a spiral of poverty. The need to participate in the paid labour force of the economy so that their household members could eat regularly, be clothed and attend school was in contradiction to the ideals of traditional Xhosa world views which continued to impact on the participants. The participants regularly reported that there was very little time to do anything else except struggle against the daily threat of death by poverty. The time-intensive task of nurturing the psychological development of their children was a luxury the women could not completely enjoy. Participants reported that most mothers were aware that their children were engaged in substance abuse (most often reported to be cigarettes and alcohol), or truancy from school, or unprotected premarital sex but had neither the time nor energy to make concerted efforts with other mothers to end this.

Conflict between mothers and daughters of different ages respectively was commonly reported in the interviews. Young women felt as in the case of Winnie that parents "say that we [young adults] are taking things too easy. They say 'we were good to our

parents, so you must be good to us!' But we say 'you are not good to us, how can we be good to you?' Parents are not perfect. They forget this. So we must tell them 'you are not perfect and we are not perfect'." There exists a tension here between on the one hand traditional world views which stress unconditional respect for elders and on the other hand, a hybrid of American sitcom rhetoric and liberal concepts of the right of freedom of expression. This tension was similarly experienced by the mothers in the study. Jean reported that children lacked respect for not only their mothers but for everyone and anyone. This she stated was due to the socio-political and socio-historic contexts of South African township life as a whole. Jean claimed that it was "the time of the lightening" or rapid social change where the pace of the change meant that emerging ways of being were in direct tension (sometimes conflict) with traditional views set up as ideals of female (read as motherly) conduct. The intra- and inter-psychological effects of this - namely anxiety, anger, despair, frustration - were obvious throughout the interviews.

3.c. Theme three: Women and work

The tension and conflict between the ideal and the real experiences of what it was to be a woman were most apparent in the participants' discussions of women and the work they perform.

The lack of socio-economic development in the Eastern Cape and the legacy of apartheid socio-political practices (see Cock (1980) for a discussion of this on the lives of domestic workers in the same region) meant that women were employed in specific contexts. Women living in Port Alfred's township - with its lack of infra-structure and economic growth (see Cock,1980; De Villiers,1988) - had limited employment opportunities. In 1988 Port Alfred reportedly had an unemployment rate of 62% (see De Villiers,1988). Current estimates have run as high as 80% (see Nemato Voice, June 1993). Those women who were able to find paid employment were most often employed as domestic workers in the private homes of some of the 4 500 white residents living in Port Alfred.

6 of the 16 participants had been or still were employed as domestic workers in private households in the town. The conditions of employment faced by women working as domestic workers ranged from poor to alarming. Phylis' experiences as a domestic worker in the home of a white pensioned couple is one such example. At the time of the interviews, Phylis had been employed as a domestic worker by the same employer since 1973. After 21 years of service, Phylis reported that she received a monthly salary of R200. Her total income from paid domestic work and state pension amounted to R275 a month. Phylis headed and financially supported a household of 6 adults and teenagers.

Domestic workers according to Jean who herself was an ex-domestic worker were openly exploited in Port Alfred. Jean reported that domestic workers worked long hours and received little or no benefits. Several of the participants commented on this and on the low pay received by domestic workers' and the lack of sympathy and recognition by white employers of the fact that all residents were suffering under the same conditions of food price hikes and increasing expense. The participants reported that they were aware of the exploitation of domestic work but stated that women had to accept this because they needed to work to support their families.

Other participants also discussed their own experiences of work. Young and mature women reported that they experienced substantial pressure trying to develop their careers, feed their families and trying to behave "appropriately" according to widespread and popular perceptions of what was viewed as women's work. These views are a hybrid of traditional Xhosa and sexist views of women's work and capabilities. Younger women such as Leleti were more confrontational in approach: "you know a lot of women feel guilty and think 'oh god, they should be at home, watching kids' - even if they don't have any - "and cooking'. That's rubbish!" Participants in their thirties to fifties meanwhile reported that the poverty meant that many adult men were migrant labourers and many women were left to fend for the household without any assistance from their spouses. This was in direct contradiction to what these women had been taught as children.

When asked about what was “women’s work”, many of the participants both young and old referred to beadwork or sewing or generally any work performed with one’s hands. Clearly, women’s work is conceived of as non-cerebral and hence not career-oriented. Women’s work was perceived of as physical, semi-skilled and based on traditional notions of household activities for the “social” reproduction of the labour force. What this suggested was that similar to the literature (see Meer,1990), women’s work was underpaid and undervalued. The identification of women’s work as beadwork or sewing implied that it could not significantly contribute to the economic re-structuring and development of the community on a large scale because it was individual-based, isolated and based on negative gender stereotypes. In the face of the immense poverty evident in the township, the image of women earning money by sewing clothes belonging to old men is pathetic and tragic.

Returning to the first point raised in this topic, that of both young and old women referring to women’s work as sewing and bead-making, it was surprising that the younger participants who were better educated and who had made initial attempts to establish their careers as clothing designers or journalists accepted that this was and would be the “fate” of most women in their community. Their responses suggested that they still subscribed to many of the stereotypes about women’s contribution to the community’s economic development. They also clearly viewed their own careers as examples of individual rather than female success stories.

Older participants in the study reported that they had to continue to perform unpaid work in order to defend against starvation. Gardening was one such example of this. The discussions of this revealed that their gardening initiatives was little more than subsistence and conducted in isolation by individual women. It was clear that their gardens were not effective strategies against the constant threat of starvation because they were not concerted community-based initiatives. Some attempts had been made to set up community-based garden projects in the township but these had failed or were failing because the food that was produced was perceived as belonging not to the community but to the few people who worked in the gardens. These projects also lacked

the resources of capital and space to feed a community of approximately 20 000 families (with 6 to 7 people in each family). The extreme poverty in the township fostered a selfishness and divisiveness between the community members and participants repeatedly stated that the projects were not seen by the community as community-owned but as a form of employment for the few who guardedly protected their "rights."

The data from the interviews also indicated that the certain groups of participants distinguished between women's paid and unpaid work. Work performed in the paid labour sector was perceived by older participants to be different from that of unpaid domestic labour performed by women in their own homes. This was an interesting result because those participants who stated that there was a difference between paid and unpaid domestic work were ex-domestic workers. The work performed in both their own homes and their employers' homes although in essence the same was not viewed as worthy of the same respect. Housework was unambiguously perceived as women's work and was based on a hybrid of traditional Xhosa and capitalist divisions of labour. Men were seen as true workers. Only 1 of the older participants stated that neither men nor women had exclusive rights to work, payment. Zoleka stated that the work women performed could not be devalued just because it was performed by a woman. Her comments were interesting because she had headed her own household since her husband abandoned her. Those women who accepted the traditional notions of women's work were widowed.

The relationship between work and education was most often discussed by the younger participants. Teenage pregnancy was often cited as the main reason for women not completing their education and for having to confront poverty because of the resulting limited employment opportunities. Winnie, the youngest participant, derisively reported that many young girls discussed their hopes of becoming teachers. Teaching was seen as an acceptable option for women. Winnie however mentioned that Leleti's presence in the community had inspired many young girls to become journalists. Winnie's comments suggested that the career opportunities for women in the township were limited to teaching or nursing because of (among others) the limited number of role models

available to young girls and the particular types of gender stereotypes present in the community. Khanyi elaborated on this point in detail in her discussion of the issue of politicisation of women. Career women were most often teachers and nurses while the majority of women in the township did not have careers. Khanyi and Winnie claimed that the average township women performed work which was semi- or unskilled because of limited education opportunities, a lack of infrastructure and because as women they had been raised to believe that all they could ever hope to be were teachers or nurses (that is better educated nurturers).

A final issue which was raised was that of the increase in prostitution among women in the community. Without becoming too embroiled in the debates about prostitution or sex work as either sexist or feminist phenomenon, women in Port Alfred who worked as prostitutes were reported to be extremely vulnerable. The participants mentioned that the clientele consisted mostly of truck drivers from the nearby national traffic routes. There appeared to be very little protection for these women in the form of medical services, legal services and advice centres. Participants reported that these women faced possible HIV contamination through unprotected sexual intercourse, police and/or client brutality, and sexual harassment. The participants' comments about women working as prostitutes were surprisingly unsympathetic and full of scorn. Nozipho for example claimed that teenage girls traded sex for money either to feed their own children or to obtain pocket money. Although Nozipho understood that most prostitutes were single mothers who could not find work, and who were unambiguously exploited, she viewed them as "immoral" and indecent women.

In general then the concept of work had specific gendered socio-economic meanings for participants. A limited infrastructure and even fewer employment opportunities in combination with restrictive notions of "women's work" had created an underclass of female-headed households in the township within which women had very little power and resources to transform the poverty in their community.

3.d. Theme four: Women and development initiatives

In the course of the interviews conducted, the participants were asked to discuss the issues of development and women's roles in community development initiatives. These discussions with the participants about the role that women played in community development was vital because observations made at community meetings suggested that these initiatives were being hijacked by young, male activists (see Appendices for notes on community meeting).

The data from the interviews revealed that 62.5% of participants were aware of some or other development projects running in the community and were aware of the projects' objectives. Younger participants in their 20's and 30's were most knowledgeable about development projects in their community. Only 1 of the participants over the age of 55 was as knowledgeable about the projects. The reason for this was her involvement in the LODAFF initiatives. This suggested that older women, heading their own homes and engaged in limited opportunities to provide resources for their households are not targeted by development projects in the township. This was seen as consistent with the literature's claim that development initiatives do not reach those who most needy (see Charlton, 1984).

The participants often referred to the following development projects which were up and running in the township: the "back-to-school" campaign, the gardens project, the LODAFF sewing project, the ECNA literacy and community reporters workshops, the SANTA's sewing projects. The "back-to-school" campaign for example was developed to encourage adults who had not finished their schooling to go back to school. Leleti reported that it was very encouraging to see 22 and 23 year olds doing standard 8 again. She added that this project involved more women than men as men were more likely to have completed their schooling. Leleti identified the explained that the reason for this as "an urgency that if you are a woman you have to come back and look after the family as the household relies more on women to keep them going."

The SANTA sewing project according to Winnie paid women for their sewing. This she argued allowed the women to think of their participation in the development project as a "job". Winnie was critical of this project and the women's attitudes as she did not see any evidence of the women "go[ing] back and teach[ing] the others about sewing ... so this project is not used by the community." The general attitude of participants to the development projects and initiatives in the community was pessimistic. Participants claimed that the development projects "weren't working" or were "doomed" or "ineffective".

When asked why they had expressed such views, 50% of the participants claimed that development initiatives would fail because the poverty in the township was too immense. Interestingly, those participants who most pessimistic about the development initiatives were in their 50's. 30% of participants stated that development projects would fail because (a) there was a current lack of skills and a failure of projects to develop skills in the community; and (b) the LODAFF was ineffective. Again the participants in their 50's were most vocal about the LODAFF's ineffectiveness. It was of interest that within this group of "pessimistic" participants that there was a range of levels of education from tertiary levels to secondary levels and to primary levels. Those with lower levels of education most often identified the promoters of development as ineffective while the participants with higher levels of education often identified the community as lacking in skills. The LODAFF was believed to be unable to cope with the enormity of the poverty within the community and ineffective because of its lack of experience, its internal structure and composition, the functions assigned to it by the ECDAFF, and the expectations of the community.

Other key issues identified as a reason for the failure of development initiatives in the community was that of traditionalism, divisions between leaders and people, and a lack of community unity. Traditionalism was mentioned by participants with the highest levels of education: Winnie and Nita identified this as "backwardness" while Khanyi stated that the women were conservative because of an adherence to customs. Khanyi claimed that it would take a long time to change this - "maybe a hundred years because change

is a very difficult thing.” Women with secondary and tertiary levels of education tended to identify divisions between leaders and grassroots people as a key obstacle to development. Leaders were seen as concerned with abstract ideas that confused many people in the township. The participants comments indicated that the community leaders are for whatever reasons removed from the day-to-day realities of the women in the township. This allowed them to better manage the changes in contemporary South African society as they did not face the struggles which they women did. Critical reflection and innovation appeared to be a luxury which the impoverished could not indulge in as “risks” too often resulted in starvation. Older women with lower levels of education identified the lack of community unity as an obstacle to community development. The participants reported that the community was divided and its members were socially and politically isolated from one another despite the proximity of the houses.

The remaining reasons offered for the failure of development initiatives included comments about the township being more like an informal settlement than an established township, high levels of dependency created by the poverty and an underdevelopment in the community. Older participants who headed their own households and who had only attended primary school claimed that additional obstacles to development were linked to the fact that women were too tired to be involved because of their almost continuous battle to maintain their households.

In general the participants held pessimistic views of development projects in the community and stated that they were doomed to fail because of the enormous poverty in the community. They identified traditionalism, divisions between leaders and ordinary people, lack of skills transfer, and the inexperience and ineffectiveness of structures set up to co-ordinate development as obstacles for successful and sustainable development to occur. The participants comments suggested that they had a solid understanding of social, economic, political, psychological aspects of the development process. Decisions about development initiatives appeared to have taken place at leadership levels only. As a result, women experienced no sense of ‘ownership’ of and ‘commitment’ to

development in their community. There was evidence of fatalism, defeatism and pessimism in the women's statements about development. This was consistent with the psychological aspects of poverty and dependency (see Hirschowitz and Orkin, 1995). Development initiatives in the community and discussions of development appeared to require serious reflection by the CBO's, the development forums, the leadership and community members of the township as the data showed that in light of the current economic realities, the psycho-social contexts revealed key symptoms of future failure.

3.e. Theme five: Women, marriage, lobola, tradition

In the interviews with the participants, the theme of marriage and what it meant for the participants arose on numerous occasions. There were several interesting trends in the data which reflected the participants' direct or indirect experiences of marriage, and provided interesting insights into the gendered power relations in the township.

Discussions of marriage for married women generated associations with marital conflict . 37.5% of all responses referred to marital conflict. The participants claimed that marital conflict between women and their partners arose because of a lack of money and economic hardships directly affected the healthiness of the marital relationship. Phylis for example stated that she had divorced her first husband because he had abused her and had made no economic and psychological contribution to their household and their family. The participants mentioned that although some women in their community were divorced it was more likely for women to have been abandoned by husbands who had migrated out of the township or rural areas. The participants claimed that many women chose to "go it alone" rather than cope with abusive partners who made no contribution to their households or children.

Younger participants in the study - all of whom were unmarried and ranged in age from 20 to 27 years - described marriage as "rare" and "backward." These responses were from participants who were well educated and in the case of Winnie, Nita and Leleti more career oriented than other participants. Their comments reflected a cognitive shift away

from traditional views of women towards a combination of western liberalism rather than feminist views of women and marriage.

Women between the ages of 30 and 40 spoke of marriage as an option for having children and as a means of legitimising their status as mothers within the community. Marriage facilitated their personal status upgrade to the acme of womanhood, identified as motherhood.

Older participants often referred to what components, attitudes and behaviours were required of the good wife. The good wife was a woman who in behaviour and attitude was respectful. The good wife was respectful to and of her husband and elders. These statements suggested that the older women in the study still subscribed to traditional views of women's subservient roles because "respect" was identified as and associated with deference and obedience to men. The experiences and views of women in their 20's, 30's and 40's on the other hand was quite different from the former group. For them, marital conflict arose because of the economic hardship facing the community which undermined and made impossible the option of subservience and deference.

There was evidence of a tension between the ideal and the reality of marriage in these women's discussions. Predictably, the younger women were more direct in their rejection of the attitudes and behaviours of the ideal good wife. For the married participants in their 30's and 40's, marriage was a means of preventing and was a bulwark against poverty. The notion of marriage here was stripped down to the its basic element of a vehicle for the social reproduction of the work force. Those women who headed their own homes were believed to be the most impoverished underclass within the community (see Whiteford et al,1995) but due to the high incidence of marital conflict, abandonment, abuse the participants reported that many women opted to go it alone.

In term of the participants' perceptions and opinions of lobola, a correlation was found for the participants' perceptions (positive and negative) and education levels. Older women with little or no formal education were most supportive of the notion of lobola

which was viewed as a way of ensuring that one's child was married to a "decent" man in a public, communal legitimization of the marriage union. Khanyi claimed that many women in the township did not support the leadership's rejection of lobola customs. She stated that ordinary women had been omitted from these discussions, and had not been allowed to present what meaning it had for them as ordinary women. Khanyi claimed that there was a tension between the traditional and liberal views of lobola which she predicted would be a contentious issue in the community's future political scene.

In general, the discussions about women and marriage reflected that women of different ages, marital status's and education levels - sometimes living in the same household - held different views on marriage as the pinnacle of women's social development. The older women in the study more readily accepted traditional notions of marriage and women's roles in this relationship. The younger women tended to reject these ideas and justified this with western liberal notions of individual rights. As was predicted by one of the participants, women's organisations in the township still have to deal comprehensively with the issue of marriage and women's rights.

3.f. Theme six: Women and politics

The political struggles within Port Alfred's township have long captured the imagination of activists and feminists in South Africa. The 1986 Port Alfred Women's Stayaway for example was touted as evidence of African women's feminist consciousness and power (see Forrest and Jochelson, 1986). Political struggles in Port Alfred in the early 1990's appeared to be somewhat altered.

In the discussions with participants about the political issues and political struggles within the community in the 1990's, 70% of the 16 participants identified a single major political issue faced by the community. On the one hand, 40% of all participants identified poverty and the class struggle as the single most important political concern not only for the community as a whole but specifically for women. On the other hand, 30% of participants claimed that racism was the most important political issue for women in the community. The participants who identified the class issue were mostly in their

20's and 30's with tertiary and secondary education levels. By contrast, participants who identified racism as the main political issue were in their late 50's and 60's with primary or no formal education levels. There very clearly was a relationship between race and class and gender struggles in the community, which the participants readily identified. Mama T for example claimed that white residents "don't care" about their black counterparts in the township. "They [whites] know we are suffering but they don't care. They know how expensive it is at the shops but they don't care." Similar comments were reiterated by the other participants who saw a close connection between racism and class exploitation of the community.

Women's political struggles and political concerns were at various stages in the interviews identified by participants as "bread-and-butter" issues. Politicisation among the women in Port Alfred was claimed to be quite diverse and dependent on the age, education and employment status of women. Young women for example stated that they had no role to play in the community based organisations in the township. The ANC women's league for example was identified as dominated by older women. Young women were therefore marginalised and their potential to be fully involved and directing community development remained untapped. The participants reported that younger women's political issues such as their more vocal concern with abolition of lobola, rape and harassment, education were ignored by the older members of the league who prevented younger women from entering into discussions about these issues. Similarly it was reported that there was a gap between the leadership of the ANC and the ordinary women in the community. Many of the participants stated that the ideas the leadership were concerned with were abstract and removed from the realities of women in the township. Participants stressed that the leadership had to look at the practical aspects of jobs, housing and food in the community.

Professional women too were politicised around different issues from those of non-professional women in the community. Professional women such as teachers and nurses were seen as not predisposed to involvement in the community's political struggles. The participants claimed that the teachers and nurses were concerned only

with their own professional issues such as salary increases. Commenting on this, Khanyi claimed that professional women did not get involved in community power struggles or in community political organisations because “they [were] more educated ..[and] they don’t want to be subordinate to ordinary people. In Port Alfred especially teachers join teacher’s organisations because they enjoy the parties, braais and social events. But they don’t join political organisations.”

Divisions existed between the political struggles of women and men. Men were previously regarded as concerned with “hard” politics (violent political activism) but were now concerned with “abstract” politics. ANC youth politics in the township were dominated by males and the younger participants reported that young women in the community were marginalised or ignored. Nearly every participant stated that women unlike men were concerned with bread-and-butter issues.

In the mid 1980’s, the Port Alfred women’s stayaway had united women in the community around (typically) women’s issues of education, children’s welfare and concern with police harassment of children and women, and rape in the community. Now almost a decade later, the political scene for women appears to be stagnant and divided. Dependency appears to be a key obstacle at this stage of the women’s political mobilisation and struggle in the township.

The data from the various interviews suggested that many divisions existed between the women in the community based on age, education level and employment type, and which affect their political mobilisation and concerns. All of the participants reported that there was little unity between the women in the community. The participants did appear to have accepted black consciousness backlash rhetoric about women’s issues not being feminist issues. The participants claimed that feminism was “un-African” and divisive of community unity. What was viewed as acceptable content for a women’s struggle was “just equal rights between men and women, nothing feminist.” The participants implied that feminism lacked concern for community unity, well-being and development all of which were held in high regard for appropriate politicisation for women.

Political issues for women then appear to have been shaped by the realities of apartheid's social, political and economic policies. The township's history of women's mobilisation and politicisation has undergone some radical changes in the last decade. Some of the reasons appear to be the increased immigration into the community, the rapid development of the squatter settlement occupied mostly by women, and increased economic hardship. The township has also to accept that in the 1980's its political struggles were dominated and led by the charismatic few. The ANC itself recognises this: even Nelson Mandela during his 1992 visit to the township referred to it as "Nkwintiplan". Nkwinti was one of the key activists in the township in the 1980's. The legacy of charismatic leadership has meant that after the departure of some of these leaders and activists from the community there was not only a vacuum of skills but a relationship of dependency which had been established.

Secondly, the "new" ANC which emerged in the 1990's has diffused and deflated the enthusiasm of the street-based struggle in the township. The organisation has developed a new discipline or code of conduct which has meant that women can no longer spontaneously erupt into the streets to protest a particular issue. Rather they are expected to arrange venues and organise very structured protests. This new discipline favours the discussion of abstract issues and fails to spark the interest of especially young women in the community. It also implies that women's concern with bread-and-butter issues is being increasingly shifted off the political agenda for the leadership despite the alarming escalation of teenage pregnancy, unemployment rates and single women headed households.

6.4. Summary of research findings

This thesis has with varying degrees of success attempted a valid exploration of what are some of the issues facing a group of 16 African women in the township of Port Alfred in order to provide some insights into the operation of power in society. 6 themes were identified from the interview data which when considered together form a case study of women's experiences of township life.

The findings of this study suggested that the economic, political and social realities of township life were experienced in a particular gendered way by the participants. The findings did not suggest that it was possible or acceptable to construct a simple vision of all women in the township experiencing the same issues or expressing the same concerns. What was evident was a diversity of experiences between participants of different ages, education levels, marital statuses, employment statuses. In brief, the results suggested: (1) that women were more likely to be politicised around class and economic underdevelopment issues because of the enormity of the poverty in the township which women experienced especially harshly; (2) that the issue of motherhood was experienced diversely and perceived differently because of differences in the participants' ages, education levels, household composition and the level of income within households but still needed to be satisfactorily debated by the township's women's organisations; (3) that women's experiences and views of work when combined with the limited resources in the township created an underclass of women and female-headed households; (4) that women were pessimistic about the success of the development initiatives within their community and were not central players in that process; (5) that women's views of marriage reflected the tensions between what is the ideal and the real, the old and the young, traditionalism and hybridised liberalism; and (6) that political divisions and stagnation were increasingly evident in women's organisations in the township while women were marginalised by the new discipline of the ANC and the political abstraction of its young, male leadership.

Women's experiences of township life revealed interesting insights into the operation of power in society. There was clear evidence that women in the township had particular gendered experiences of economic hardships and political issues quite different from those of men, and quite diverse as a group in and of themselves. Power was not a homogeneous force which affected all community members or all women in the same way. Diversity of age, education, employment, marital status located various groups of women in specific points in the web of power in society and resultingly shaped their experiences of township life. The case study of the township indicated clearly that power was a multi-layered, dynamic, complex phenomenon and process which was

experienced as such. Experiences and views of for example motherhood indicated quite clearly that each stratum - psychological, social, political, economic - possessed specific generative mechanisms which contributed towards the totality of that experience or view held by a particular women. Individual diversity of opinions or attitudes were evident as were the similarities that existed between certain groups of women.

In the last decade, the township of Port Alfred has experienced some key changes, not all of which were ones of positive transformation for the women in the community. In the 1980's the local women's organisations captured the imagination of activists and feminists alike. In the 1990's however pessimism, fatalism and stagnation had increased. Many development initiatives had failed and those which are being initiated are expected by community members to fail. One of the key features of the township which was revealed was that of the marginalisation of women in the political and development decision-making processes in the township. This marginalisation was ironic and pathetic as women constituted the largest percentage of household heads and were entirely or largely responsible for the survival of the members of their household. Psychologically, this meant that in part women were pessimistic about the development and reconstruction of their township, hostile towards other women in the community who attempted to challenge the status quo, despairing of the social changes in the township and wider society. It is not the intention here to state that these women were nothing more than oppressed victims unable to articulate and change their realities (see Collins, 1989; King, 1989). The women in the township were oppressed by a combination of racist, classist and sexist power relations both overt and covert. To deny this is counterproductive to the task of emancipation. The women were however also survivors who used a variety of tools or resources to ensure their survival or that of their families. These tools or resources which included among others the promotion of education to children, the use of traditional views of motherhood to command respect and develop a sense of self-worth, the use of the threat of rape as a means of social sanctioning of young girls were varied and not exclusively in and of themselves appropriate or unproblematic. It is hoped that these insights (discussed in detail in the

previous section) have contributed towards informing the emancipation strategies of the township's women and community organisations

6.5. Evaluation of the study

Constraints - such as limited time, energy and money - impacted upon this study and affected the results and presentation of the documentation of the research. In addition to this other factors which influenced the study included among others the "sample" of participants; the questions asked by the researcher; selection and editing of data; the methodological and philosophical slant of the study.

In terms of time constraints, there was a very real pressure to finish this study and to achieve the necessary rapport quickly to obtain information from the participants. Despite several interviews being conducted with various participants over 1992 and 1993, in retrospect this too was not enough time to obtain a detailed information on every participants' personal life history and valid representations and accounts of their perceptions of their community. In terms of my own knowledge and awareness of interviewing skills and questionnaire design (this does not even begin to address the issue of conscientising myself with feminist literature and philosophical debates on science, knowledge and emancipation) inexperience fostered an anxiety that trailed me throughout this research, and is despite various re-readings still evident in this document.

The issue of the sometimes quite demoralising and demotivating involvement with the ECDAFF and access into the community meant that those women who agreed to participate in the study were probably more confident and (justifiably) less fearful of possible repercussions associated with talking to a white, female, academic researcher than say the less visible women in the deepest areas of the squatter camp. It meant that politically these women were aligned with a very definite position. Although attempts have been made to point out the differences between these participants the reader unfamiliar with this study would probably be more attuned to their similarities. It is true that the participants in the study do not reflect a fair cross-section of the majority of

“ordinary” township women’s ages, education and employment levels. Several studies suggest that most Port Alfred women are single, employed as domestic workers (if employed at all) and have little or no formal education. Most participants in this study were not domestic workers but the study did adequately illustrate that those women who were employed were overwhelmingly in service-type work, and is thus consistent with much of the literature on black women’s employment in South Africa.

The issue of inexperience and my own development as a researcher needs to be properly stressed. Inexperience meant that the questions asked could have had more focus, and that the study’s aims as a whole could have been sharper but despite these shortcomings the study has with honesty tried to cope with what are the perceived shortfalls and gaps in psychological studies on black women’s lives in communities in South Africa. The theoretical and philosophical foci within the study illustrate genuine concerns with (1) the issues faced by women in Port Alfred and a need to ensure that these issues are redressed appropriately; and (2) a concern with the state of South African feminist scholarship. The Port Alfred community and the role of women in that community provided the catalyst for identifying the challenges facing and shortcomings in much of contemporary South Africa feminist scholarship. It is the final position of this thesis that postmodernist, neo-pragmatist, relativist and/or positivist analyses of the many issues facing women in Port Alfred would have had very few constructive implications for the future mobilisation of women in that community. These suggestions would have been misguided and would have continued to marginalise women and perpetuate the notion of feminism as irrelevant to the women’s struggle in Port Alfred.

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Appendices

Overview

This section contains: (a) a biographical vignette of each of the 16 participants, (b) a socio-economic profile of the community, (c) a transcription of the first interview with a participant as an illustrative example of the research conducted, and (d) some notes from a participant observation of a community meeting.

Appendix A: Biographical vignettes of the participants

Nita was a reporter for the local community newspaper. She was a very mature twenty one year old who was very certain of her life goals and her beliefs. Nita had completed her matric examinations in 1991. She was receiving "on-the-job" training as a reporter and wanted to study journalism at Rhodes University.

Leleti was editor of the local community newspaper. She also played an important role in this research. Her journalistic and interpersonal skills placed her at an interesting point in the Port Alfred community.

Beko was a child minder at a local pre-school. She was an executive committee member of the LODAFF and has a history of involvement in local political struggles.

Tembi was also employed as a child minder at the same pre-school. She too was a LODAFF executive committee member. Tembi was heavily involved in negotiations with the CPA about the future of the school and the qualifications of its teachers.

Nozipho was employed as a secretary at a legal advice office. Her secretarial skills were self-taught. She was married with children.

Frene was a cook and child minder at a local pre-school. She was also a skilled seamstress who sewed flags and other memorabilia for the local ANC branch. Frene had a standard eight certificate, and was married with young children.

Jean was a shop assistant at a furniture dealer store. Jean is a mother of school going children.

Phylis had been employed for the last twenty six years as a domestic worker. She received a basic farm school education. Phylis had been married twice and had four children.

Batina has never been employed. Raised on a farm in Keiskammahoek she moved to Port Alfred when she was first married. She had 2 children in their twenties.

Nomsa was one of the pensioners in this study who earned income from a vegetable garden attached to her house. She was widowed with four children. Nomsa had no formal literacy skills.

Nombulelo, too, was a gardener and head of her own household. She had standard one level of education. Nombulelo was married at seventeen, recently widowed and had six children.

Siphokasi's marriage was responsible for residence in Port Alfred where she lived in her in-law's house, and assumed responsibility for household work. Siphokasi had 4 daughters, only 1 of whom still lives with her. Siphokasi was born on a farm and received no formal education.

Zoleka was one of the oldest women in the study. She, too, was born in Keiskammahoek and moved to Port Alfred after her marriage. She had four children and six grandchildren, most of whom lived with her.

Helga was a retired domestic worker, a member of the LODAFF, the Women's League and the Pensioner's Association. She was one of the "wealthier" pensioners in the community. She was widowed with four children.

Appendix B: A socio-economic profile of the township

Port Alfred township consists of two township localities, namely Nelson Mandela Township or Kwasekezi, and Khayamnandi squatter camp. The "impoverished township [of Port Alfred] was widely acclaimed as 'a model of community organisation'" (De Villiers,1988,65) by political parties, community organisations and international commissions, alike.

Port Alfred consists of about 20 000 families living a few kilometres from the white coastal town and business district of Port Alfred, a popular retirement and holiday area for white South Africans (E.C.D.A.F.F.,1993). De Villiers' (1988) survey revealed the following statistics of Port Alfred life: Unemployment levels stood as high as 62%. Illiteracy levels at 13%. 22% of Port Alfred residents were pensioners, often supporting entire families on this pension grant (Nemato Voice, August 1993).

Typically, a township house consists of 4 rooms, housing on average 6 people, and is crowded together with other houses along untarred streets (De Villiers,1988). Houses have no electricity and no proper sewerage systems. People use pit latrines and/or bucket toilets. There is no refuse collection service, no tarred roads and no recreational facilities for Port Alfred residents. Health services, too, are virtually non-existent. The clinics which are available are poorly equipped and as a result, many are forced to seek medical assistance from hospitals and clinics in Grahamstown (De Villiers,1988). Even in 1993, residents are still fighting for electrification of their homes, and proper sewerage and refuse services in the township (Nemato Voice, June 1993).

Port Alfred and its neighbouring town, Alexandria (fifty kilometres away) did not develop along specific blueprints or township models (E.C.D.A.F.F.,1993). Rather, Port Alfred developed its own system according to the specific circumstances and existing forces (De Villiers,1988).

1. The development of democratic community organisations

1983 witnessed the launch of the Nomzana Guardian Association (N.O.S.G.A.) was hailed as the first truly democratic community organisation in Port Alfred. The Port Alfred Residents' Civic Organisation (P.A.R.C.O.) had been launched in 1982 and was initially very popular. But due to political inexperience and a lack of direction, P.A.R.C.O. lost much of its support base. This was also complicated by the township-councillors decision to participate in the 1983 Black Local Authorities elections which destroyed the last of P.A.R.C.O.'s credibility and support in the township.

N.O.S.G.A. consisted of concerned community members who had organised as guardians of education; an action which "made sense in a small town where residents had worked all their lives to save money to give their children a reasonable schooling" (De Villiers, 1988, 69). Certain teachers at the local high school were very unpopular with parents and students who opposed their unilateral and undemocratic decision making processes. Under the 1984 United Democratic Front (U.D.F.) "Collect a Million Signatures Campaign", N.O.S.G.A. conducted door-to-door discussions with township residents and gauged residents' general feelings and thoughts, which were voiced in popular township newspapers, Grassroots and Illizwe LaseRhini. As a consequence of this, N.O.S.G.A. called a successful boycott in Port Alfred which ensured that certain administrative functions would be handed over to the Parents Teachers Students Association (P.T.S.A.).

In January 1985, the Port Alfred Workers' Union (P.A.W.U.) - an affiliate of the South African Allied Workers' Union (S.A.A.W.U.) now the Congress of South African Trade Unions (C.O.S.A.T.U.) - was launched. During 1986, K. and G. began operating an informal township information centre out of their house, to provide advice on pensions, unemployment payments and pass law problems. Eventually, the resource/information centre was housed in a separate building. And in March 1986, the Youth Congress (P.A.Y.C.O.) was launched.

Twelve representatives from Port Alfred Pensioners Association (P.A.P.A.); N.O.S.G.A.; P.A.W.U. and P.A.Y.C.O. were elected onto the Port Alfred civic

organisation's executive body. The launch of various community groups during this period is important. During the early 1980's, "the political climate of this period - the "time of the viva" - as it has popularly been dubbed - was conducive to the development of mass resistance; the popularity of the U.D.F. and its affiliates was likewise significant in making the strategies of protest possible" (De Villiers, 1988, 46). And this was visible in Port Alfred township.

De Villiers has argued that mass-based organisations in the Eastern Cape were "by far the strongest in the country" (1988, 37) because of a number of factors: The high degree of historical resistance in these communities was visible in the Xhosa-Boer wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These communities also exhibit relative linguistic and ethnic homogeneity; comparatively small percentages of working class migrants and high levels of urban residence (De Villiers, 1988).

2. The role of women's organisations in Port Alfred

After the rise of N.O.S.G.A. and other community based organisations such as P.A.W.U. and P.A.P.A., in the early 1980's, it is interesting that a Port Alfred women's organisation was launched only in 1986. P.A.W.O., headed by activist-teacher, K. N., came into existence as a direct response to the need for a women's organisation and for an organisation that would actively and constructively engage with the students and youth of Port Alfred.

P.A.W.O.'s negotiations with students involved stressing the need for consulting with other organisations and the dangers of unilateral decision-making by the township youth. P.A.W.O.'s message was clear and strong; "the struggle is important but discipline is too" (Forrest & Jochelson, 1986, 25). P.A.W.O. embarked on joint projects with the youth, aimed at establishing recreational facilities, a self-help centre and crèche in a community which faced massive unemployment.

The second motivation for establishing a women's organisation in Port Alfred arose from an awareness of the absence of women's voices and interests being represented in the other community based organisations. P.A.W.O., a relatively small but strong group of women had no members on the 48 member committee of Port

Alfred - the decision-making body of the township. Members came from P.A.R.C.O., P.A.W.U., N.O.S.G.A. and P.A.P.A. but not P.A.W.O. The launch of P.A.W.O. was a response to this.

The 1990's Port Alfred political scenario is very different. The post February 1990 events which heralded the return of the ANC from exile, deeply affected the current political developments under way in Port Alfred, and more importantly for this study, the women of Port Alfred - a phenomenon discussed in Chapter 6 (Discussion).

Appendix C: A transcription of the first interview with Leleti

Note: "C" refers to the researcher and "L" to the research participant, Leleti.

C: When did you finish school?

L: I matriculated when I was sixteen years old and I actually wanted to be a cop! [laughs]. So I went to the Ciskei and they said I was too short for how much I weighed. I didn't become a cop! [laughs].

C: So you became a journalist?

L: I always used to write stories in school, and I thought "I will become a journalist". I got "on-the-job-training" at various papers and places. I was a freelance journalist for Grocotts, the Herald, the Sowetan. When I was freelance I took photographs, wrote stories and I earned quite a bit working and getting commission. But I couldn't stand the hierarchy at the Sowetan. I mean all those men who were editors making decisions! Also, Grocotts isn't a community newspaper. Like in Port Alfred, it only reports on what big fish was caught on the weekend. Not the important stuff. So I left and thought I am gonna start my own paper. The motto of the paper is "build friendship, build hope, and build peace". I want the paper to build links between the township and the town. The paper must be about people in both parts of Port Alfred. We must work to build a united community. But the paper has been seen by some people in the town as a black paper. That's okay because for a long time the people in the location have not had a paper that reports about what is happening in their community.

C: Do you have a specific column for women? Do you report on what women want to hear?

L: Yes, we do. Like we talk about what women are doing. We report on fashion, disco's and beauty. Like stuff you'd find in Fair Lady. Nothing feminist.

C: Why?

- L: The paper must try to bring men and women together. We don't want to be a women's paper because then we would be doing exactly what men have always done. So I am trying to build a community paper. What I want to do is get business to sponsor us so that we can report on fashion, whose making clothes. That kind of stuff.
- C: Do you belong to any political organisations?
- L: I used to belong to the Youth League in Port Alfred.
- C: Isn't the Youth League mostly for young guys?
- L: Yes it is. But I just barged my way in. I wasn't going to stand back. You know, women feel guilty and think that they mustn't get involved. They feel guilty and think "oh, they should be at home, watching the kids", God even if they don't have any [laughs] "and cooking". That's rubbish! We need to push our way in! Any way, but the point is obviously I still support the ANC but as a journalist I have to be objective.
- C: Can you tell me about Port Alfred?
- L: Port Alfred is very poor. Its almost like a squatter settlement. People haven't been given houses. They've built their own from what they have. Port Alfred is very poor. There is no money in the township. My father and I built our own houses.
- C: What is the kind of population you have?
- L: We heard that some student did a study in Port Alfred: In 1989, there were 11 000 families. Now in 1993, there are 29 000 families. At first we thought she meant 30 000 people but she meant 30 000 families. And most of those families live in the township. That is a lot of people if you think that each family has about 6 or 7 people. Also, a lot of squatters are living on the hills near the location.
- C: This must really be causing problems.

- L: The township leaders are having a problem at the moment. They have been asking people not to use the old graveyard which is nearer the township to bury their dead. There is a new graveyard further away. But the roads aren't good and the people can't get there. So they still use the old one. But the problem is that the old graves are from nineteen-something and don't have gravestones and you can't see them properly. People, now, have been burying their dead on top of the dead. This is causing problems.
- C: Port Alfred has a long history of political mobilisation - especially the women. Is it still like this?
- L: Yes it is. You know Port Alfred is like that because people are so poor. But we have fought against racism in the township. You know, Khayamandi, as it is called by the people and the police is the official name. But the community calls it Nelson Mandela Township. We call it that in the paper and everyone has started calling it Nelson Mandela Township. Which is good.
- C: And the women in Port Alfred, what are they up to?
- L: You know women must work together with me to build a strong community. I am not a feminist. I don't want women to do what men have. I fight for equal rights for all. We need to build a society based on equal rights for men and women. This is what trying to bring across in the newspaper.
- C: Do you think that rape is quite a common phenomenon in Port Alfred?
- L: Rape does occur in Port Alfred but the township doesn't have a worse problem than elsewhere. Rape is a problem. A lot of women and girls here have been raped by someone they know. Also, there is no entertainment and nothing for people to do. So they hang around and get into trouble. We need disco's and fashion shows to entertain the youth. This gives them an alternative place to meet and enjoy themselves.
- C: Does Port Alfred have any support groups for women who have been raped?

- L: No, there is nothing like that. We need Rape Crisis to teach women about rape.
- C: Does Port Alfred have the usual problems with crime, or is it worse because of the poverty here?
- L: Port Alfred is no more violent than elsewhere. Yes, we have violence that is related to the struggle. Criminal violence exists. Like stabbings. But it is not worse than elsewhere, like in Grahamstown or Alexandria or Kenton. Port Alfred is just very poor. And this is a problem.
- C: What roles do the political organisations play in Port Alfred community?
- L: The ANC is very strong. We renamed the township after Comrade Mandela. We all call it that. So we are fighting to change it with the authorities.
- C: Do you think there are gendered differences in the struggles in Port Alfred? Like men fighting one thing, and women another?
- L: In Port Alfred the men still want to fight hard politics and to keep on with the struggle. But I think we need to move towards making Port Alfred one community, with the whites in the town and us in the township. We need a united community. We need to be building bridges. And friendship between people so we can come together. Voice can do that. You know, by featuring stories on people.
- C: Can you tell me about Nemato?
- L: I have a whole lot of kids involved. They've got a camera and they go get pictures, and a story and then they can be published. I also have a column for fairy tales written by kids. I want to try revive our traditions and customs of story telling, like oral traditions.
- C: So you are trying to draw the youth in?
- L: A lot of the school kids in Port Alfred don't go to church any more. They are too involved in the struggle. And this is a big difference between them and the older

people. We must use the paper in this way to get the kids to build friendship and hope.

C: Has the paper been successful?

L: Ya. When we started, we printed 2 500 copies and they were all sold. In the first week we sold almost 1 700. And the paper must be for everyone. Like little kids who have 30 cents can buy it instead of spending it on rubbish. Also a lot of people in Port Alfred are semi-literate.

C: How many of the people?

L: About 20% I think. I want people who can read to read it to them. Voice also has stories in Xhosa 'cos some people can only read Xhosa. And then the others can read other stories to them.

C: What is the type of response you've got?

L: Well I've got R10 000 from the Canadians. That will cover the costs of the paper for the next three editions. Also, I want to get business in Port Alfred to advertise. You know they can sponsor a fashion show and if people see this then it will help them too. Because we've got this money, I want to get advertisers in and then I can build up a base and pay for future copies.

C: Leleti, I want to get my research reported back to the women I have worked with, would you use it and would it be of interest to the readers?

L: Other people in the community must hear about what women are thinking. Also, the women can hear what they have said. It would be good then because people can talk about it.

D: Some notes from the participant observation of a typical community meeting

Approximately ten women in the audience are dressed in traditional garb. All twenty women in the choir are dressed in traditional Xhosa clothing.

All questions asked during the meeting are asked by men. Three of the men are below the age of 25 years. The rest range in age from late thirties to early sixties. The latter man participating in the discussion period, only wished to make a comment about how desperately Port Alfred required development.

The election of the interim LODAFF consisted of nine members, all below the age of 30 years. These five men and four women represented the ANC Women's League, C.O.S.A.S., the Cultural Activities group, the ANC, and even the Pensioner's Association. When asked by one of the guests why a young man was representing the pensioners, the response was that the pensioners wanted someone young who would speak for them on the LODAFF.