THE ROCK AND THE HARD PLACE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG POST-1994

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the College of Humanities, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

The memory of my late Dad whose belief in me enabled me to believe in myself.

My Mum whose life is a testimony to the power of resistance and endurance.

To all the countless and nameless women whose daily lives, though stories of struggle and despair, of hope and fortitude, are inspirational.

Abstract

In the post -1994 era, the new government of South Africa and its legislation intended the eradication of gender inequality and gender abuse and the empowerment of women at all levels of South African society. This principle is enshrined in the country's constitution and is further legislatively supported by other laws and state organizations. Whilst it may be argued that the new democratic South Africa has made great strides in many spheres, many women, including those who are economically empowered, continue to experience gross oppression and abuse in various spheres of their lives, especially within the domestic context.

The aim of this research is to investigate and identify whether support groups, fundamental to eradicating gender inequality and to the empowerment of women, have been established in Pietermaritzburg and to assess the extent of their efficacy and success. Whilst the latter is relative and difficult to measure, the effect that the support provided by support groups has had on women, will be used to determine the extent of their success.

The research also aims to investigate the role and intervention of the state and its related machinery in the functioning of and provision of services to these support groups. The research is conducted using mainly qualitative analyses and methodology. Inquiry is made from a wide spectrum of sources relevant to support groups in order to establish credible conclusions. This approach is undertaken mainly within a feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework as it supports the complex, multi-faceted experiences and contexts of South African women whilst transcending the confines and limitations of mainstream feminism. Post-structuralism critically analyses the ways in which power relations are structured and maintained through legitimate functioning which also enables the control of people over others. Whilst a feminist poststructuralist framework enables understanding of the constructs of support groups, discourse around them, as well as possibilities for change in women and their lives, it also provides for discourse around how social power is exercised, in the context of this research, within the groups themselves and more significantly, by the state. The concept of intersectionality will also be applied in the analysis of how different groups seem to construct their identities and services rendered.

Intersectionality is a feminist theoretical framework which examines how race, gender, class, ethnicity and other social divisions intersect in the discrimination of women. Furthermore, intersectionality will be used to explain how differences amongst women and groups may be transcended to construct solidarity mobilisation for transformation.

Key words: **support-groups, gender, feminism, poststructuralism, narratives, subjectivities, intersectionality, empowerment, discourse, identities, power**

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE - Introduction and Outline of Study

CHAPTER TWO - Feminist Discourse on Women as Collective Agencies of Transformation

CHAPTER THREE – A History of Support Groups for Women in Pietermaritzburg

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION and OUTLINE of the STUDY

– creating the scene

> *We tell our stories (of war) like stories of love, innocent as eggs… always for the first time.*[1]
> *"I looked for help at a shelter they called 'Place of Hope' and found despair"*[2]

1.1   Background

The genesis of this work lies within my personal experiences and experiences of women with whom I have interacted over the years. The discourse of this research has not just been an interesting and informative academic exercise for me, but one which has unfolded parallel to my lived experiences. The search for answers and conscious effort to understand and explain women's experiences, especially those which disempower and deny their lives and humanity, has been enlightening on an academic level, but also humbling and disillusioning at a personal level. I had approached this research with the hypothesis that great gaps still existed in the formal system and in society, which not just mitigated against the transformation of women's lives, but which seemed to perpetuate gender inequalities and the oppression of women. My experience and findings of this research have resulted in a 'violent' awakening to 'reality' for me. This research has enabled me to formally posit and confirm my hypothesis. Furthermore my experiences in soliciting the services of (a) support group/s as well as my personal interest in gender issues have informed my choice of research topic.

South Africa's history of violence and fragmented societies is all pervasive and filters densely down to the localised domestic context. Domestic violence and abuse of women have been acknowledged as a global scourge (Hague et al. 2003: 2; Gouws 2005: 72). Research has shown that those who suffer the worst consequences of the violence in its many forms are women (Padayachee and Pillay 1993; *Commission on*

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[1] Baderoon 2005: 61
[2] Barbara- 10/2010.Respondent, on her experience of one support centre

Gender Equality 2001; Rasool et al. 2002; Ramphele 2008). In attempting to deal with this scourge, the government,[3] in its transitory endeavours, instituted statutory provisions and subsequently supported legislation with state machinery to drive the gender agenda. Initial national advocacy drives from gender activists held promises of deliverance to women most affected by all forms of violence at the local level. This was manifest in the *Women's National Coalition* of 1992. Further to legislative provisions, the state and its gender machinery embraced and claimed subscription to global initiatives on gender equality.[4] Initiatives such as the *South African National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality of 2000* (*South African Office on the Status of Women*: 2000) and the *Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities'* Report in 2010 to the *African Union* on the progress made in implementing the *African Heads of States' Declaration on Gender Equality* (South African *Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities:* 2010) confirm the government's support of international gender programmes. All of these initiatives make reference to the marginalised and repressed lives of women in general which need to be addressed. Starting with the global contexts through the articulation of these declarations, it is envisaged that initiatives would be actively filtered down through national contexts to localised contexts. Realistic articulation of all of these declarations therefore means that the lives of ordinary women will be impacted on positively and transformed. Fundamental in giving effect to these declarations at the local level are support groups for women. Whilst the powers and authorities officially and legislatively responsible for the driving of gender issues remain omniscient but invisible entities to women on the ground, it is the support groups which deal and interact with women at the coal face of their lived experiences.

1.2   Research Problem

The post-1994 era intended the eradication of gender inequality and the empowerment of women at all levels. This principle is enshrined in the country's constitution and is

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[3] The word government is used interchangeably in this thesis with the word 'state' to reflect the references made to the both terms by respondents and also to reflect the responsibility of government as part of the state

[4] For details of these, see *UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979; UN Beijing Conference on Women 1995; UN Millennium Goals for gender equality 2000*; African Union's (AU) *Declaration on Gender Equality 2004*

supported through statutory bodies such as *The Office on the Status of Women (OSW),* (established in the Presidency, 1996) the *Commission on Gender Equality (CGE)* (a statutory body in terms of chapter 9 of the Constitution of The Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996) and more recently, the *Ministry on Women ,Children and Persons with Disabilities* (established in May 2009 by the new President Jacob Zuma as a body in the presidency and which replaces the OSW and its related machinery) . Legislation such as *The Domestic Violence Act* (Act 116 of 1998) and state initiatives such as the *16 Days of Activism against violence against women and children* (undertaken annually from 25 November -10 December since 2000 in SA) intend providing legal support/ recourse to women and creating public awareness around the issue of women abuse in the country. This legislation is intended to give effect to and actively support *The Women's Charter for Effective Equality*, a manifesto which is intended to encompass all facets of women's lives which require redress in South Africa and which proposes actions for such redress and transformation in those facets. *The Women's Charter for Effective Equality* was the result of intensive collaborative research, inquiry and campaigning nationally by the *Women's National Coalition* (WNC-a coalition formed in 1992 by various women's groups and organisations from across the spectrum of the South African landscape) and which was officially presented and accepted in October 1994 at a national convention of the WNC (*Women's National Coalition* 1994: 9) The Charter identifies twelve areas of women's issues which require redress and transformation, including Violence against Women, (ibid: 16), Family Life and Partnerships (ibid: 15), and the Economy (ibid: 12).

However many women, including those who are economically empowered, still experience gross oppression and abuse in various spheres of their lives, especially within the domestic context. These practices necessitate support for those women. The challenge is to translate state policies and initiatives into practice through means that are genuinely accessible by all women. This fundamental support and enabling mechanism I believe, is that which is or can be found in the personal context of support groups. Whilst it is not the intention of this research to examine the efficacy and success of the *Women's Charter for Effective Equality* over the last 17 years, the examination into women's support groups will serve as a benchmark of the success which was sought to be achieved.

Support to women in the form of political or economic redress only through the promulgation of legislation is merely cosmetic redress, if it is not underpinned by more basic redress: the personal and its embodiment. A very simplified example of this may be providing a woman (who has not formally worked before) with an opportunity to work and therefore be a little economically empowered through her income. But if she does not feel emotionally and psychologically empowered and confident enough about what she does and about her working context, her earning money becomes a ritual, a means to an end; perhaps a means to purchase things. Indeed if she has to work hard for a paltry salary, the effects could be more damaging than when she was not working. Hague et al.'s critique on abused women in the United Kingdom (UK) holds true to the South African context as well: "…it has always been possible to live with a wealthy man and yet to have no disposable income or personal freedom of one's own, or to hold a well-paid job and yet to be harassed, abused and raped" (2003: 10).

While I agree that economic and political transformation for women is essential within the South African context, I do not agree that these two concepts are mutually inclusive and automatically translate into social empowerment. Transformation needs to be undertaken from a basic level, that women should be empowered as individuals first and then as agencies for economic and political change or activity. I am familiar with many women who, even at relatively young ages were able to negotiate relatively challenging situations and stand their ground, even though they came from quite economically impoverished backgrounds. The cases of many prominent South African women, who contributed significantly to the political struggle against a backdrop of economic poverty, also attest to this. Whilst I agree that economic empowerment is a powerful tool in the empowerment of the individual, I am of the opinion that fundamental empowerment lies in the self and can be harnessed separately to economic empowerment. In other words, economic empowerment does serve as an important currency in social relations and material status; however an individual who is confident with herself and is 'empowered' will be able to engage in and negotiate situations even though she may be economically or financially lacking; the converse can also take place. Economic empowerment is necessary for development but cannot be regarded as sufficient on its own. Political empowerment

in the form of legislation supports or reinforces the empowerment at the level of the self, but without the latter, the former is rendered useless. The many cases of abused women not being able to or not accessing legal recourse, in spite of political legislation to the contrary, lend credence I believe to my assertion, which resonates with Hague et al.'s (ibid: 18) understanding of empowerment: "Empowerment means gaining personal strength and self-esteem, and then social influence and power, typically through collective self-organisation, through identifying with one another and through offering mutual support".

Thus where legislation and policy seem to be non-existent at the localised level of implementation, support groups serve an important role for those women who are not able to access the Constitution in its practice of gender equality. Thecla (2004: 40) cites Minkler's description of support and support groups as 'personal contact through which the individual maintains his/her social identity and receives emotional support, material aid, services, information and new social contracts. Such support can be from immediate or extended families, friends, neighbours, co-workers or professional health providers.'

1.3 <u>Objectives of Research</u>

This research seeks therefore to investigate support groups and examine their efficacy in terms of the impact they have on the lives of women they seek to provide a service to and the extent to which they serve as agents of empowerment for women. Hague et al. (2003: 18) describe empowerment within the context of support groups as: "gaining personal strength and self-esteem, and then social influence and power, typically through collective self-organisation, through identifying with one another and through offering mutual support". The support groups referred to for the purposes of this study constitute any group that provides assistance to women for oppressive socio-practices they may experience and which denies them their citizenship, identity and humanity to the extent that they deliberately and wilfully seek support or help from these groups. Support groups may therefore comprise of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) or state agencies.

The research also seeks to examine the translation of the state's theoretical commitment to addressing gender issues at grassroots level. Crucial to this translation is the support of the state to support groups. Gouws (2005: 72) analyses the state's commitment to gender issues and development of women in terms of their full (women's) 'citizenship'. She argues that citizenship goes beyond the formal entrenchment of rights and the creation of structures (ibid). In this thesis, I intend focusing on how 'citizenship' may be enabled and supported through interventions of support groups as well as, how the state enables such 'citizenship' as I believe that the dominant discourse of the state on gender impacts crucially at the level of local support groups.

Thus using mainly a feminist poststructuralist framework I examine how support groups for women have been constructed historically in Pietermaritzburg to their present identities which mediate power relations with the state and also serve as agents for empowerment of women. Using Foucault's poststructuralist analysis of language, subjectivity, social organisation and power, I seek to illustrate how the state constructs power and influences its location within that of support groups, while simultaneously abdicating from its social responsibility and agenda. Using an intersectionality theoretical framework, I will also examine and explain the different constructs of support groups and their identities. Yuval-Davis (2006: 192) explains that the concept of 'intersectionality' had been first posited by Crenshaw in 1989 when she (Crenshaw) discussed issues pertaining to Black women in the United States, specifically issues of employment. The concept evolved into a feminist theoretical framework which examines how race, gender, class, ethnicity and other social divisions intersect in the discrimination of women (ibid: 194).

As this research examines experiences of women and the dynamics of power pertaining to women, it is underpinned by feminist research. Kumar (2011: 132) asserts that feminist research is more a philosophy rather than a methodology as it " … creates awareness of women's issues and concerns and fosters action promoting equality between sexes." Using a qualitative approach this research probes the following key issues:

- the publicizing of the support groups / structures identified and advocacy of these support groups / structures

- the actual support given to women and the impact that this support has on women's lives
- the correlation between legislation and actual implementation regarding these support groups / structures
- the support provided to these groups by government
- the constraints experienced by these groups which mitigate against more successful services being provided eg. financial and human resources
- legal constraints which mitigate against the services being provided fully and effectively

Gaur and Gaur (2006: 29) describe qualitative research as one which involves the collection of data through observation, interviews and open-ended questions. They further explain that this type of research, which can also involve data analysis through the identification of patterns and themes, is usually context specific and includes narrative reporting with descriptions and direct quotations. The methodology employed in this research is commensurate with such a description and is explained in detail in chapter four of this thesis. The methodology is underpinned, as stated previously, by elements of feminist research. Nielson (1990: 30) states that whilst feminist work is emancipatory in that it identifies obstacles to equality and freedom, it is fundamentally critical in its approach and structure. This research supports such an assertion as whilst it (research) seeks to identify obstacles to the effective functioning of support groups and thereby possibilities for transformation, a critical point of view and approach permeates it.

My research is also largely informed by an 'interpretative' approach. As indicated earlier, my personal experiences have informed my approach to and interpretation of the various aspects of this research. However Kelly states that: "We cannot apprehend human experiences without understanding the social, linguistic and historical features which give it shape" (in Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999: 398). Thus a formal epistemological grounding precedes one's own understanding and interpretation of experiences and the world around oneself. Thereafter one (the researcher) would interpret and understand the context and text from an external perspective or view. I make use of such an approach in this research. Kelly (ibid: 399) describes Ricoeur's term for this approach, 'distanciation' as: " one which adds to the meaning not by

imposition, but by pointing to the subjective and contextual limits of understanding… there are certain things about the context that are only going to become evident when we look at it from the outside." This process which combines interpretative and critical constructionist research is termed by Kelly as 'interpretative research' (ibid) and is one which I have adopted. Whilst I continually refer to my 'inside' experiences to interpret contexts, I am guided to a more holistic 'outside' perspective and interpretation by 'distancing' myself from the discourse and allowing formal epistemology to guide me. At the same time I am aware that I am conducting research about women's issues and women's lives: feminist research, and my interpretation therefore is underpinned by critical discourse as cited in Hughes (2002: 193,194) and Weedon (1987: 133, 167). Whilst I seek and offer explanations for women's lives and their intersecting with support groups, I am also critical of the same.

1.4 Structure of thesis

Chapter two locates this research within an appropriate theoretical framework. Brief analyses of different strands of feminism will be undertaken. This will be followed by an analysis of the South African context which necessitates the application of a theoretical framework which transcends the divisive barriers of first and second wave (Western) feminisms, as well as one which can be applied to the unique South African context. Weedon expounds on feminist poststructuralism as a theory which enables 'understanding of power relations and identifies strategies for change' (1987: 40). She further states that this theory can offer explanations not only for our experiences, but also for limited political change and for how individuals are the constructs of social institutions and processes (ibid). As these are key issues which underpin this research, this chapter will discuss why a feminist poststructuralist theory is therefore most appropriate for this research.

Chapter three traces the development of support services for women in Pietermaritzburg, the capital city of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. It will document identified organisations which offered support to women in various contexts. The constructs of support groups within 'historical specificity' (Foucault in Shumway 1989: 21) will be examined - how support groups came to exist and be constructed within different contexts of history. The evolution of support from a dominantly

political discourse to that of a more social one will be examined. The challenges and constraints of past and existing support groups will be briefly discussed here as well.

A detailed description of the research undertaken (as outlined on page 16 hereof) will be provided in chapter four. The methodologies used, together with the instruments and techniques, will be described. The number and nature of support groups identified will be provided (if necessary, by pseudonyms). Descriptions of the data collected at each stage of the research will be provided with the corresponding methodologies. The periods for which the data was collected will also be provided. Challenges and problems encountered in the course of the research will also be discussed here.

Analyses of the data and information collected will be undertaken in chapter five. The correlation amongst the different sources of information will be examined together with the identified variables of this study. The levels of success experienced by the identified groups will be examined against the findings. Analyses of the findings will be undertaken in the light of the initial aims of this research and located within a broader framework of secondary sources. The construct of power by the state and its relations with the support groups will be analysed against the findings of the research as well as how different identities of race, class and sex intersect in the construct of abuse by women as well as the support groups.

The concluding chapter provides an overview of the research undertaken together with future implications for support services by groups/centres as well as for the state. Included herewith is also a brief personal reflection on the research and its implications.

1.5 <u>Narrative style of thesis</u>

The poststructuralist theoretical framework underpinning this research is also commensurate with the narrative style employed throughout this thesis. In researching support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg as well as experiences of women I am cognisant that an aspect of social reality is being examined and therefore beyond the academic prescripts of this research, I choose to 'tell a social story.' This resonates with Kellehear's assertion (1993: 25): "Poststructuralist writers …often write as if they were telling a story. They are 'up front' with their attempts to tell a social story, explain an account of things, in a different way."

CHAPTER TWO- Seeking the Truth

FEMINIST DISCOURSE ON WOMEN AS COLLECTIVE AGENCIES OF TRANSFORMATION

> *Jesus answered, "Yes I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth: and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice." "Truth?" said Pilate "What is that?"*[5]

2.1   BACKGROUND

This chapter serves to perform various functions. The first is to locate this research within a formal epistemological framework and is broadly divided into three parts. As this research is located within the field of gender studies, the first part contains an analysis of feminist theories as a possible basis for the addressing of women's issues. Whilst references will be made periodically to a relevant theory (or theories) in this research, a *dedicated* approach will be adopted for the purposes of this literature review (Ridley 2008:7). Ridley describes a dedicated approach as essentially containing references to theories, and descriptions and critiques thereof, in one main chapter. The reference to different theories and tracing their relevance will assist in locating the topic of this research within current contexts and challenges, thereby identifying possible gaps in this field (ibid:17).

The second part of this chapter will locate this research within that theory which seems most relevant. An examination of that theory will be undertaken to locate this research within that theoretical framework. Such an examination will consist of various expositions of the theory as well as my criticism of the theory.

The third part of this chapter will posit the essence of this research. A general description and discussion of support groups will be undertaken. The description will include a historical background of support groups for women in South Africa tracing the developments to a current context. Locating this research eventually within a

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[5] John 18: 37-38, in Jones (ed) 1966: 186

current context, will also include a brief examination as to why this research has been undertaken and the significance thereof. Whilst possible gaps within this field may be identified, possible solutions for charting the way forward will also be provided.

2.2   INTRODUCTION TO FEMINISM

Weedon's definition of feminism serves as an appropriate framework within which to locate both an understanding of feminism as well as the basis of this research: "Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become" (Weedon 1997: 1). Support groups for women are a fundamental articulation of that assertion. The fact that there are support groups, that there exists a need for support groups, how these groups are structured, how they function, how they are accessed, are all indications of the power relations in society and how the lives of women are structured and implicated in this research. Since the genesis of feminism as a movement, it (feminism) has concerned itself with change and the need to redress the state of women's lives. Different strands of feminism have posited theories to explain and interpret the state of women's lives and the possibilities for transformation politically, economically, socially and culturally.   Although these different strands reflect the conflict within feminism as a movement, the common strands in these theories are the desire for change and an emancipatory ethos. The conflict mentioned here will be explained later on in this chapter and will also become more apparent as brief descriptions of different theories are provided.

2.2.1   Liberal Feminism

The emergence of feminism as a consciously identifiable movement in the 1960s – which became known as 'Second Wave feminism'[6] - is generally attributed to the

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[6] First Wave feminism dating from the late nineteenth century was largely concerned with the suffragist movement, the right for women to vote in Europe and is regarded as originating in France. (Beasley 1999: xiii).

(feminist) movements in the west (USA and Britain). These movements which subsequently became known as Liberal feminism, attempted to challenge the roles and existence of women, which were largely relegated to the domain of the domestic. Women's roles were socially confined to the nurturing and menial enclaves of gendered divisions of labour. They were perceived by society in general and by men in particular by virtue of their sex or femaleness, as being biologically constructed to undertake specific roles, responsibilities and tasks, very distinctly separated and different from those undertaken by men. Women entering the formal economic domain especially after the world wars, were often confined to jobs within the clerical disciplines. Liberal feminism concerned itself with the contestation of such socially constructed norms and perceptions of women, those constructs of which subsequently defined and dictated women's existence. The concept of the female embodiment and subsequent treatment thereof, as being the result of social perceptions and value attachments, is emphasised by Whelehan: "The primary site of struggle, for liberal feminism… was the female body itself, and the restraints imposed upon it by contemporary Western notions of femininity" (1996:6). Liberal feminism is concerned with women having equal rights and opportunities as men, including the notion of 'equal pay for equal work', thus focusing primarily on the sexual divisions of labour.

2.2.2   Marxist Feminism

In the 1960s and 1970s some feminists located the discourse of sexual divisions of labour within the contestation of class and power. These feminists who based their scholarship on Marxism and which subsequently became known as Marxist feminism, view class as being the determining factor in the oppression of women, within the context of capitalism. Marxist feminism, like Liberal feminism, is concerned with the lives of women as workers within the formal economic labour market, to which they contribute, but have little or no control over. However, Marxist feminism identifies a dichotomy between societal constructs and economic constructs as asserted by Beasley: "… unlike liberal feminists, Marxist feminists are deeply antagonistic to the capitalist economy and advocate a revolutionary approach in which the overthrow of capitalism is viewed as the necessary precondition to dismantling male privilege" (1999: 61). Marxist feminism is also concerned with the role of women within the

domestic sphere- undertaking domestic work for no pay /wages. This strand of feminism sees the family as a microcosm of the larger capitalist society where the woman as a domestic worker, is subordinate to the man / husband who represents the broader patriarchal society and capitalist ownership. In this sense women are seen as the subservient working class to men-with dialectical relations of production and power. Thus Marxist feminism makes the assumption that the eradication of class within society, together with a shift in relations between production and power, will result in the eradication of women's oppression.

2.2.3 <u>Socialist Feminism</u>

Debates within Marxist feminism lead to the emergence in the 1960s and 1970s of the strand of feminist thought known as Socialist feminism. Whilst Socialist Feminism may be viewed as a form of Marxist feminism, it (Socialist feminism) views gender, in addition to class, as being a crucial factor in the oppression of women. The issues of sexuality and reproduction as socially constructed gendered roles, are the main foci of socialist feminism. Thus socialist feminism concerns itself with the dynamics of the power relations inherent in these issues.   Marxist feminism is criticised by socialist feminists as negating the issues around gender and power by focusing only on issues of production and class inequality. Hartmann (in Nicholson 1997: 110) argues that the politics of capitalism which contains socially constructed sexist ideology, and which further perpetuates the domination of women by men, is ignored by Marxist feminism. She states that, as women's work both perpetuates male domination and capitalist production, sexist ideology serves the purposes of glorifying male characteristics/ capitalist values, whilst denigrating female characteristics / social need. She thus advocates a socialism which deals with both capitalist oppression and socially constructed oppressions: "As feminist socialists, we must organise a practice which addresses both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism. We must insist that the society we want to create is a society in which… women do not continue to support the false as well as the concrete freedoms of men" (ibid:114). To contest patriarchy in isolation would be, according to her, bothto endorse and propagate the inequalities of capitalism, which also oppresses some men too. Therefore, to adopt the stance that all men are 'free' is an anomaly;

hence a falsehood. Whilst men are instruments in the oppression of women, they also experience oppression within the capitalist system.

2.2.4 Radical Feminism

The ideologies contained in both Liberal and Marxist feminisms seemed inadequate to some feminists in understanding the oppression of women and subsequent agenda for their transformation. This feminist school of thought identified as Radical feminism in the 1960s and 1970s presented itself as an extreme departure from any of the other previous feminist movements or ideologies. The fundamental core belief of Radical feminism is that the female psyche is intricately interwoven with female sexuality. Beasley explains this defining argument of radical feminism: "Radical feminism describes sexual oppression as at the very least a fundamental form of oppression and the primary oppression for women" (1999: 55). Radical feminism saw patriarchal society and dominance, as being responsible for women's oppression, in its entirety. Radical feminism therefore sought to forge a new women's movement, extricated from any male involvement, male oriented interferences or movements with links to male discourse. In a sense Radical feminism seeks to (re)claim the collective identity of women within their own spaces and their own discourses, especially female sexuality and its subsequent broader implications. This stance is supported in Whelehan's assertions: "Radical feminism therefore, attempts to create a discursive arena freed from the tyrannies of male-orientated political discourse" (1996: 68). Furthermore she concludes that: "Much of their energies were focused around gender as a social construct from which permeate all other forms of material and female oppression. … From their perspective the problem quite categorically for women is men" (ibid: 70).

2.2.5 Black Feminism

Black feminism emerged in the United States of America (USA) as a deliberate assertion within the discourse of already prevalent feminist politics (radical and liberal feminism). Intertwined with the civil rights movement and turbulent history of the USA in the 1960s, Black feminism sought to identify women's oppression

specifically from the experiences of Black women, as it was felt that other feminisms were too 'mainstream' and excluded the variable of race, the latter being cogent to the politics of oppression. In contending that the scholarship of Black feminists had been excluded from the other feminisms which were prevalent at the time, Hill Collins cites the argument of other Black American feminists: "Even though Black women intellectuals have long expressed a unique feminist consciousness about the intersection of race and class in structuring gender, historically we have not been full participants in white feminist organisations" (hooks et al. in Hill Collins 1991: 7). It was felt that the other feminisms located their discourse within the experience of white, heterosexual, middle-class females and therefore the very different experiences of oppression of Black women were subsumed by this 'mainstream' feminist discourse. Black feminism rejects even the notion of common sisterhood espoused by Radical feminists, the notion being that all women have more in common with each other and therefore lesbianism should be the advocated relationships for women rather than those with men (Beasley 1999: 54). Hill Collins refutes claims that feminist theories are universal and are able to include Black women in their contestations: "The absence of Black feminist ideas from these and other studies places them in a much more tenuous position to challenge the hegemony of mainstream scholarship on behalf of all women" (1991:8).

2.2.6 **African Feminism**

The concern of Black feminism that 'mainstream feminism' appears exclusive and negates the experiences of Black women, is shared by African feminism alike, although African feminism is a relatively new epistemology within feminist discourse and is also presented with its unique complexities. Sachikonye (2010) states that the assumption cannot be made that there is one simple African feminism: "African feminism is not a clear cut concept that can be precisely defined and delineated. This problem of definition does not deny the existence of African feminism, but acknowledges the complexities denoted by being an African and a feminist at once." Sachikonye concurs that African feminism parallels first of all, core issues of liberal western feminism such as the mobilisation for reproductive rights, affordable health care and improved working conditions, but she is critical of Western mainstream feminism's lack of inclusion of African women. Sachikonye cites Nnaemeka's (ibid)

reiteration of this view: "The issue of balance is neglected in the one dimensional Western constructions of African women- usually poor and powerless. According to Sachikonye, one of the complexities in African feminisms is its dualistic nature, namely intellectual feminism and popular feminism. Intellectual feminism is usually seen as being the pursuit of urban, educated African women, the activities of whom are usually manifested in theory. Popular feminism is rooted within the culture and lived experiences of African women. This intellectualism versus 'popularism' manifests in the tensions between 'activist and academic' discourse, a tension prevalent in South African society. The viewpoint that popular feminism caters for the majority of African women, many of whom are illiterate, is shared by Snyder and Tadesse (in Visvanathan et al. 1997: 80): "Popular feminism thus often rallies for gender equality based on the notion of African women's historically important and influential role in food production and the day to day running of the colonial society. Popular feminism therefore appeals to African women who consider their culture vital to their identity."

Mama (in Cornwall et al. 2007: 153-154) asserts that whilst feminist scholarship within the African context has grown, especially that which is commensurate with economic growth on the continent, she cautions against a misguided interpretation and embracing of that concept. She states that there are instances where feminism and feminist interventions have not sought to or resulted in the outcomes which were proclaimed to have been undertaken (ibid). She argues that the providing of jobs to women is not necessarily an indication of empowerment and sometimes those very economic initiatives serve to perpetuate women's oppression and gender inequalities (ibid). Such situations largely underpin the tensions in African feminisms.

2.3 <u>CONSTRUCTING A DISCOURSE ON SOUTH AFRICAN FEMINISM</u>

The complexities of African feminism are entrenched too within South African feminism, not just as formal epistemology, but in praxis. That South Africa is generally viewed as the leading nation on the African continent in terms of its democratic agenda and reform, is expressed in its election to the UN Security Council in October 2010: "South Africa has since May 1994, following its non-racial and democratic elections emerged as the political and economic powerhouse of the

African continent" (The Authoritative Link: 2010). South Africa's election to the UN Security Council in 2010 demonstrates the international confidence that is vested in it (SA). However South Africa is still characterised by gross differences between what was referred to by then president Thabo Mbeki in his 2005 State of the Nation address, as the 'first economy and the third economy,' in reference to the dichotomy between the developed, affluent sector and the impoverished, underdeveloped sector of the country (South African Government Information: 2005).

These economic disparities are symptomatic of the experiences, contexts and histories of South African women and have been captured vividly in expositions on the country's history. However discussion and debate located specifically within South African feminist discourse have been relatively sparse and fraught with tension. Since Walker's summation that the formulation of a feminist theory appropriate to South Africa "has barely begun" (1991: xxii), feminist scholarship in South Africa has not altered drastically in terms of the generation of formal epistemology. Gasa alludes to the tension and debate within South African feminism in relation to African feminism and also within the conceptualisation and discourse around South African 'feminisms' (2007: xvii, xviii). She asks rhetorically, "What and who is a feminist?" and although she concedes that this is a question that remains as important today as it was … in 1982 (ibid: 215), she herself does not appear to posit clear answers on the subject. Rather what she presents as South African feminism seems a broad conflation of all the concerns and activities of mainly Black (African) women. Thus South African feminism can be characterised foremost by its diversity which results in its intense complexity. Much of the debate and discussion of gender and feminist issues in South Africa is located within the parameters of oral communication. The relative paucity in formal South African feminist literature supports this statement.

Therefore South African feminism can be viewed largely within the location of African feminism and is consequently characterised not just by its nebulous nature, but by the contestation between 'intellectual feminism' and 'popular feminism,' which Walker terms 'bourgeois or separate' or 'academic or activist' (1991: xxii). Thus South African feminism, like African feminism, before even beginning to unpack it's feminism and the issues therein, seem to wrestle with the notion of ownership of feminist scholarship.

2.3.1   Tensions within South African Feminism

Fester's narrative of her experience in the women's anti-apartheid movement in the Western Cape prior to 1994, elucidates the tensions within women's groups and with the concept of (South African) feminism. Although this case is located within another province, its relevance to the country in general and the locus of this research is acknowledged. In reflecting on her personal experiences with movements such as the United Women's Organisation (UWO) and the National Women's Coalition- Western Cape, Fester states that it was challenging for women to reach consensus on what feminism was: "Most members of our organisations did not identify with the various Western feminisms which some South African, especially middle-class, women, both Black and White, ascribed to. Even though some of us saw ourselves as feminists, we would not raise it when representing the organisation, except in our personal capacities. Some dismissed feminism as western and therefore irrelevant" (1997: 46). The tensions within South African women of the different conceptualisations of feminism are significant, not only because they illustrate the conflict within the political discourse of South African feminism, but more because they impacted at a pragmatic level on the women's and anti-apartheid movements.

Fester (ibid) states that the different understandings of feminism amongst different groups of the women often resulted in tensions about what should be the focus of the organisations' programmes of action.   Conflict in ideology manifested in differing perceptions of women's issues and issues of national liberation. Amongst other examples cited, Fester reflects on the tensions and conflict which arose during an annual conference of the UWO in 1984 about what constituted 'women's issues': A lengthy debate followed on what precisely we understood by 'women's issues'. The conference agreed (UWO, 1984a) that: *these problems of women – childcare, contraception and so on are part of a bigger system.*   The majority agreed that women's issues were numerous and included apartheid, housing, poverty, violence in general and against women, etc.   The distinction between what are women's issues and what are national issues was a question which was raised intermittently in middle-class branches and at public meetings in middle-class areas. This reflected the tension between women's liberation and national liberation and women's liberation as part of national liberation. The tension within the women's and national liberation position is

sometimes equated with race and gender loyalty. There were times when some African and coloured members prioritised national liberation as 'people's needs' " (ibid: 48). These tensions cited in the pre-democratic era seem to have been sustained through the navigation into the democratic era of the country and still prevail. More detailed examination of this assertion is undertaken later in this dissertation.

These brief analyses of different theories of feminism highlight not just the defining approach or perspective of each theory, but more importantly, the differences and tensions amongst them. Although the common strand amongst these theories is the understanding that women are oppressed, which therefore necessitates action for change, these theories reflect the conflict within feminism; conflict in ideology, and conflict which confirms that feminism is not and cannot be explained as one unique and universal epistemology or methodology. The multifarious nature of experiences of women in South Africa will also be contained within one area of the country.

Given the complexities of South African women's experiences and the conflict between different theories of feminism, it is a challenge to locate this research within any one of the theories described previously. Whilst each of these theories offers valid discourse about women's oppression, each is constrained by its specific focus or apparent exclusion of broader groups of women and the dynamics specific to different groups of women. What is intended is the identification of feminist thinking which offers active and relevant discourse about and for the transformation of women's lives in South Africa (Pietermaritzburg) within a holistic paradigm, that is fundamental transformation which goes beyond the broad prescripts of economic and political legislation. Any studies within the epistemology of gender are challenging to undertake, as Malherbe (2000: 2) concedes: "Gender is elusive in the first place because it is a pervasive and powerful background condition of our existence. It is hard to form a clear idea of, or even to think about, the large features and the overall shape of our own society. People are unconsciously governed in their everyday behaviour and social mechanisms. They are conditioned by customary practices, attitudes and expectations which they are usually not even aware of, like those that determine gender relations."

Furthermore, and as mentioned earlier, feminist scholarship is saturated with tension and conflict. Much scholarship addresses and analyses the technical, political jargon and interpretation of feminist issues first, before even beginning to deal with the fundamental issues confronting women. It would seem that foremost, proponents of feminist or women's issues are faced with the complex task of unpacking, analysing and 'getting the politically correct' locating of what they want to address or have addressed first. This is emphasised by Sardenberg (in Cornwall et al 2007: 49) in her exposé of the tensions evident within feminist scholarship on feminist theory in Brazil. Sardenberg (ibid) argues that the different approaches and conceptualisation of feminist issues and terminologies themselves, render feminist practice and contestation ambiguous and retard progress within the same. She asserts: "Despite their common origins and goals, feminist scholarship and political activism are distinct practices. They stand on different bases, advance in different rhythms and, as such, are not necessarily harmonious - far from it. There is a tense, ambivalent, relationship between them…   These tensions have intensified with the construction of the concept of gender and its adoption as the theoretical object of feminist scholarship" (ibid). This assertion of Sardenberg's has relevance in South Africa as in Brazil.

2.4   POSTSTRUCTURALIST FEMINISM

I have chosen mainly a feminist poststructuralist framework within which to locate this research. Weedon posits what she terms 'feminist poststructuralism' as useful for feminist practice: "In this context, a theory is useful if it is able to address the questions of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class and race might be transformed" (1997:20). This assertion is commensurate with the aim of this research to investigate how support and support groups for women can be developed and transformed to facilitate broader transformation for them. Theory itself is constantly in process and Weedon's argument is that poststructuralist theories seem to be able to explain the patriarchal structures in which we live and our position as women and men within them and to offer strategies to change them. She states that "the analysis of the patriarchal structures of society and the positions that we occupy within them requires a theory which can address forms of social organisation and the social meanings and values which guarantee or contest them. Yet it must also be able

to theorise individual consciousness. We need a theory of the relation between language, subjectivity, social organisation and power. We need to understand why women tolerate social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men and the mechanisms whereby women and men adopt particular discursive positions as representative of their interests" (ibid: 12). If the broad underlying assumption of feminism is that power relations result in the oppression of women which must be contested, then an inquiry into that construction of power relations seems valid and appropriate. Foucault's discourse on the dialectical relationship of power relations and knowledge can therefore provide a fresh and rigorous understanding of how women's lives and their experiences are constructed, which results in their oppression. It further offers possibilities for women both to contest their oppression and realise their own power as, according to Foucault, power is everywhere and in everyone: "Relationships of power permeate the whole social body and all human relations… and also exist within individual subjects…Resistance is always possible" (in Simons 1995: 82).

Within this framework, I have chosen a feminist poststructuralist theory as being the most appropriate in which to locate this research. Not only does such a framework offer valid explanations as to why women who seek help at support centres or groups find themselves in those situations, but more importantly, it shows how these women can resist their oppressive patriarchal contexts and create their own spaces to forge new and freer identities. Thus, an exposition of poststructuralism will be undertaken which will also include the construction of a case for its relevance in this research.

Poststructuralism essentially contests the notion that language (and everything) is fixed. Poststructuralism assumes that meaning is constituted within language, but the notion that there is one fixed meaning or purpose in a given text, is rejected. It is the reader and the context rather, which gives meaning and purpose to the text, thus one given text will or can have multiple meanings and purposes. Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet this is also where our subjectivity is constructed. That subjectivity is constructed implies that it is socially produced-within economic, social and political discourses. The meanings produced within these sites are a constant site of struggle over power. Language is not the

expression of unique individuality, but conversely, it constructs the individual's subjectivity in socially specific ways. Language does not just give expression to our knowledge; it defines who we are, the image that we construct of ourselves and the image that is constructed by others of us. Language contains the power to both transcend barriers as well as to construct barriers and create power. Foucault asserts that: "Primarily knowledge and power works through language. At a basic level, when a child learns to speak, she picks up the basic knowledge and rules of her culture at the same time" (in Fillingham 1993: 12). Those rules and knowledge are expanded as the individual is exposed to and interacts with broader society, which constructs the individual through the meaning produced by language. Within this theoretical framework of language and discourse I will analyse how groups which provided support to women were constructed according to different subjectivities and how language serves not just to construct those identities but also to mediate power relations existing in those constructs.

Poststructuralism also contends that the individual or self is constructed by contending discourses of gender, race and class. The individual is therefore not a cohesive single self, but is made up of a plurality of selves arising from different contexts, experiences and histories. This concept of plurality is illustrated by Beasley: "Poststructuralist thinking stresses plurality rather than unity and in particular, reject conceptions of women as a homogeneous group. The emphasis is on differences both within and between subjects and relatedly the diversity of forms of power" (1999: 81). Meaning is subject to an individual's perception and experience of it at a given or specific time. Thus meaning is fluid, can, and will always have changing interpretations. Thus using a feminist poststructuralist analysis this study will examine and explain how support groups for women were constructed historically within the contexts of dominant power relations, how they (support groups) have deconstructed their past identities of largely political organisations to assume identities of resistance and transformation for the women whose lives they seek to intervene in. Hulme (2012: 4) states: "Post-structuralist analysis enabled me to take a critical look at the ways in which power relations are structured and maintained through the operation of discourses that legitimise the control that some people exert over others. Feminist post-structuralist analysis therefore provided me with the tools with which to question the rules by which social relations, … have been and continue to be structured." My

application of feminist poststructuralist theory to this research resonates with this assertion of Hulme's.

I will also briefly examine how issues of race, class and gender intersect within the subjective identities of support groups, and more importantly how these intersecting identities can serve not as agencies for division but as strategic collective allies for resisting dominant patriarchal discourse and advancing the agenda of gender equality (Molyneux: 1984, hooks: 1989).

2.4.1 <u>Foucault's Theory of Discourse and Power</u>

The fluidity contained in language and meaning is the underpinning philosophy of Foucault's Theory of Discourse and Power. According to Foucault, the meaning of gender is both historically and culturally produced (Weedon 1987: 22). Foucault analyses historically specific discursive relations and social practices. He analyses historically, the ways in which power is exercised and individuals governed through systems' mechanisms of law and control or order – psychiatry, the penal system, the discursive production and control of sexuality. Foucault claims that 'sexuality is not an innate or natural quality of the body, but rather the effect of historically specific power relations' (in McNay 1992: 3).

Whilst the focus of this research is not explicitly on the sexuality of women, this insight of Foucault's has relevance for this research not just because many women who seek support at centres or groups, do so as a result of sexual or sexually related abuse; but it is as a result of their socially constructed gender roles and experiences. Foucault's analysis looks to the specific details of the discourse for therein are the meanings as defined in that specific history. Discourses in Foucault's work, are ways of constituting knowledge, and together with the social practices underpin the power relations between that knowledge and its subjectivity. Discourse constitutes the very 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and the emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern. It is therefore subject to historical change. McHoul and Grace (1993: 3) state that Foucault saw a person (human subject) as being constructed by 'subjection,' which refers to "particular, historically located, disciplinary processes and concepts which enable us to consider ourselves as

individual subjects and which constrain us from thinking otherwise.".   Thus, what we experience at any given time, as well as collectively in time, constructs who we are and who we think we are. It is what happens in the public domain that constructs us, not we who construct the public domain (ibid: 4).

Whilst Foucault's analysis of power relations does offer valid explanations for the inequality in gender discourse and possibilities for resisting power, his theory does not acknowledge gender oppression historically and theoretical claims to deal with the same. If, according to Foucault, discourse is historically and specifically constructed, the ageless notion of patriarchy in its various forms as an explanation for the oppression of women is non-existent. The possibilities of appropriating knowledge and lessons from history, is negated, according to Foucault's analysis. This contradicts the construct of support groups as agencies for transformation and empowerment of women, as it is only because of lessons learnt from the past that we can seek to construct new possibilities and appropriate what is relevant from past practices. Furthermore the interrogation of who constitutes the public domain is neglected by Foucault. Shumway criticises Foucault for being too broad in his work and for not offering specific methodologies to deal with issues he refers to: "Foucault's writing about power … consists of disparate descriptions of different 'powers' in different contexts. The most that can be said is that power exists in a certain way at this time in a particular way… Instead of providing us with theories or methods, Foucault has provided us with a box of tools" (1992: 158, 159). Notwithstanding Foucault's broad interpretations and analysis, his 'box of tools' serves as valuable starting points in the understanding of power relations, especially within the discourse of gender and does offer challenges to reconstruct those power relations.

2.4.2   A Poststructuralist Approach for Support groups

The focus of this research is not to examine and analyse specifically the approaches used at support centres in their services. However, a brief discussion of the support associated with the principles of poststructuralism is useful, as it strengthens the argument for the poststructuralist theoretical framework of this research.   'Narrative

therapy' is a form of psychotherapy which uses narrative to assist people to effect change in their lives. Clients use narratives to refer to their experiences and to help reshape their identities by rethinking and shaping discourses which have been culturally accepted as dominant guiding ones such as patriarchy and heterosexuality.

White (1996), who pioneered this concept, explains: "Narrative reflects the multi-storied nature of our identities and related meanings. …narratives are powerful ways for people to reclaim their lives from problems. In the end, narrative conversations help people clarify for themselves an alternative direction in life to that of the problem, one that comprises a person's values, hopes and life commitments." It is reported that many practitioners use the ideas and practices of Narrative therapy in community work (ibid). The validity of such practice for support groups as mentioned in this exposition is acknowledged as it presents creative and transformative possibilities for the women involved.

Morgan describes Narrative therapy as: "a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist then to reduce the influence of problems in their lives" (2000: 2). She states that an important aspect of narrative therapy is the collaboration between the client and therapist and is interactive (ibid: 3). Morgan expands on the dynamics of the therapy by stating that it allows people to tell or narrate their own stories or experiences in and of their lives. The choice of 'stories' told and how they are allowed to unfold assist both therapist and client to interpret and give meaning to those experiences and lives: "…these stories will be interpreted according to the meaning that is dominant at that time. In this way, the act of living requires that we are engaged in the mediation between the dominant stories and the alternative stories of our lives. We are always negotiating and interpreting our experiences. The meanings that we give to these events occurring… do not occur in a vacuum. There is always a context in which the stories of our lives are formed" (ibid: 9). The 'safe' and 'blameless' environment provided by Narrative therapy allows people to seek answers from within themselves about who they are and what they can realise in their lives. This 'will to truth' as is termed by White, is not located 'outside of knowledge and power' (1997: 232). He asserts

rather that Narrative therapy in assisting people to emancipate themselves with the truth: "encourages (therapists) to embrace a responsibility to structure into our work processes that might be identifying of those relations of power, and that might contribute to the monitoring of the real effects of these power relations on the lives of the persons who consult us… These are acts and practices that structure the therapeutic content as more egalitarian than it would otherwise be" (ibid: 232).

The approach used in Narrative therapy therefore provides valid opportunities to be used at support groups for women. If these support groups adopt the principles or similar approaches of that of Narrative therapy, the possibilities for transformation are very real. Support groups thus render themselves agents of change through enabling change in the lives of the women that seek their help. The challenge however lies in the examination of the support groups identified, to see how their interventions on the lives of women impact at a fundamental, transformative level.

2.4.3 Criticism of Poststructuralism

My criticism of poststructuralism is the paradox which seems inherent in it: it is this very 'appropriateness' of poststructuralism to the South African situation which alienates it from the same. The ideology underpinning poststructuralism is not an easy one to assimilate, is complex and may appear beyond the scope of understanding of the very same women it hopes to impact upon. The jargon and arcane scholarship of poststructuralism, whilst positing valid possibilities for women's transformation in many spheres, presents challenges for active transformative initiatives. The challenge is to use poststructuralist theory as a basis for understanding the situation South African women are in, and then to construct possibilities for transformation in the different areas of their lives. The fundamental challenge is to transcend the 'intellectual versus activist' debate given the relatively new emergence of formal feminist scholarship in South Africa, and to effect tangible change in the lived experiences of women. Women and especially those from academic contexts who seek to impact on other women's lives transformatively need to make accessible the philosophies of poststructuralism, where the latter remains inaccessible. Another criticism of poststructuralist theory is the negating of other theories such as Black feminism and Marxist theory which historically have posited valid explanations for

the oppression of people in general and of women in particular. Poststructuralism seems to exclude the inequalities of race and economic position as specific variables in the transformation agenda.

2.5   LANGUAGE and POWER: A SOUTH AFRICAN DISCOURSE

hooks states: "We are rooted in language, wedded in words. Language is also a place of struggle. The oppressed struggle in language to recover ourselves- to rewrite , to reconcile, to renew. Our words are not without meaning. They are an action- a resistance. Language is also a place of struggle" (1989: 28).   These words are commensurate with Foucault's assertion that language constitutes us. The construct of power relations through language is manifested quite overtly in the South African context whereby language is used not just to subvert identities, but also to perpetuate the domination and oppression of marginalised groups, women being a significant one.

Relevant to a focus of this research of how language is used to deceive, create false expectations and almost subvert resistance within the domain of gender and women issues is contained in the regular public proclamation of the state's commitments and plans to deal with gender issues such as that in The *Women's Charter for Effective Equality* (1994): 'there shall be legal protection for all women for …. all forms of abuse and assault…Facilities, staffed by trained personnel, where women can report all cases of criminal and other abuse, and undergo the appropriate examination and treatment, shall be provided by the state… there shall be accessible and affordable shelters and counselling services for survivors of rape, battery, sexual assault… the state shall establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effective protection and promotion of equality for women, which shall be accessible to all women in South Africa …a variety of mechanisms must be available for women as individuals and as groups to influence legislative change which affect their lives' (*Women's National Coalition* 1994: 15). Similar proclamations and promises are made annually by state officials at women related events such as *National Women's Day*, however the level of delivery of such promises are not commensurate with the level of promises.

I shall now make references to various examples which elucidate Foucault's assertion that: "… power works through language" (in Fillingham 1993: 12) and how language is used to exert power and control and subvert contestation. The word 'black' within the South African context serves as a good example to begin with to explain the fluidity and historical subjectivity of language. 'Black' in the sixties and seventies was used as a derogatory word by the Apartheid regime and those who subscribed to its policies. It was also used ideologically and legislatively by the same government for the subjugation of a particular race group by another race group. In the seventies it was used as a word to reclaim the dignity and personal power of that same group through the Black Consciousness movement under the leadership of Steve Biko.[7] Later it was used to refer to all race groups who were not white. That wider reference is still supposed to be in use especially within political initiatives such as equity legislation. The group for which the term 'black' was originally designated, became referred to as 'Africans' as the politically correct term. However, acceptance of the word 'black' and the use of the word 'african' largely remained within the context of individual association and preference. Many people who are not white, do not wish to be referred to as 'black' and still prefer to be referred to as 'non-white,' a term itself which was considered demeaning in protest politics. Whilst this reveals the ever-changing meaning and association of the word 'black,' it also reflects the conscious choice of identity of individuals, which translates into a political choice. Such historically contexualised meanings are also contained in words such as "gay," "queer," "nigger".

In a study on hate crime and homophobia in Pietermaritzburg, Stephens (2010: 14) notes that in terms of South African law, hate crime, of which homophobic acts are part of, are not clearly or separately identified within the scope of criminal acts. Thus this lack of legal clarity impedes prosecution in hate and homophobic crimes as the exact nature of the specific criminal act are both difficult to define and therefore

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[7] Stubbs 1978: 119. Extract from Steve Biko's evidence in the SASO trial of 1976:
"If I understand you correctly, the reference I think of common literature to the term black is normally in association with negative aspects…everything which is supposed to be bad is also considered to be black"
"When you say 'black is beautiful' what in fact you are saying to him is you are okay as you are, begin to look upon yourself as a human being" (ibid:120).

prove, especially in cases of verbal assault. This has far- reaching implications for women experiencing abuse as well.

The power that is produced within language constructs is not just through the usage or articulation of words or language, but also through the manipulation, distortion and exclusion of words and language within contexts. The following words shared by an abused woman respondent in this research support this assertion:

> How do you get people to believe in you when the abuser is so convincing in public, speaks so convincingly and affectionately?[8]

This extract indicates the common experiences of many women where language does not only negate the possibility of legal action due to the blurring of legislation, but also disempowers women at social and personal levels. Just as legislation seem to perpetuate gender inequality through its language constructs, language used by abusers in the public domain, also conceal the real identity of their abuse. However, Foucault states that even such disempowering situations can be resisted: "Resistance is always possible" (in Simons 1995: 82). The fact that this woman has brought her story into the public domain, can be viewed as a form of contestation.

The public controversy around Malema's[9] use of the words 'dubhul' ibhunu' in 2011 and its subsequent banning by the Equality Court in September 2011, indicates the subjectivities contained in language as well as the power relations in which they are embedded. Trapido (2011) argues that the song, translated into 'shoot the boer,' does not have a place in contemporary South Africa as it contradicts attempts to reconcile and unite South Africans. Ndima (2011) however, is critical of the judgement and argues that the banning of the song is an obliteration of history and heritage, that it (the song) could not destabilise the country and that its banning is a construction of what is deemed as acceptable knowledge. The polarisation of South Africans on this issue is an indication of the subjective meanings inherent in language and more significantly, the power contained in language. Malema's continued singing of the song even after the banning judgement had been handed down, indicated not just an

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[8]Interview with 'Barbara'- Respondent to newspaper advertisement, October 2010
[9]Julius Malema was the president of the ANC Youth League at the time

arrogance on his part, but also the power that he wielded together with an 'unseen power' that conferred on him the confidence and spiritedness to continue with his stance. The paradoxical corollary, in this case, the ruling by Judge Lamont that the song is banned, indicates the construct of formal power in the form of the law, but also the distorted contestation of that power in the form of Malema's continued singing of the song.

A more recent display of the complexities of language discourse within the South African context was witnessed in the country over the exhibition of an art work in a Johannesburg gallery in May 2012. A painting entitled '*Spear of the nation*' elicited antagonistic reaction by many, including the ruling party which lodged a legal challenge against the gallery in question for exhibiting the painting and a newspaper for publishing its image, which it (the ruling party) argued was an affront to the president's dignity. The protracted public contestation over this issue, including a televised press conference,[10] and television discussion show[11] indicated the contested subjectivity of and interpretation of meaning contained in language. Ultimately it was the power wielded by the State that produced the culmination to the painting saga. However, the initial conscious exhibition of the painting by the gallery and the posting of the image by the newspaper on its website, were indications of contestations of power by those two agencies.

The power constructs and contestation of language are further illustrated in an exposé by waThiong' o in a national newspaper (*Sunday Times* 24 June 2012, 1). waThiong'o is critical of the apparent move to exclude African languages from academic discourse on the African continent. I do not disagree with his arguments on the ability of language to express individuality. However, I am critical of the subjective approach to language discourse that seems posited because whilst he alludes to the power within race dynamics in his argument, he fails to examine the dynamics of power in language within the context of gender. I do not mean that waThiong'o should have necessarily delved into that complexity in this exposé. My criticism is derived from the situation that while Thiong' o is so publicly vocal about the issue of African languages, a

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[10] Press Conference held at Goodman Galllery, Rosebank, Johannesburg, 30 May 2012

[11] *Interface*, SABC 2, 27 May 2012

similar stance of public engagement does not seem to be adopted in a context where the use of language denies women their identities and human rights.

Another relevant example of the manipulative use of language in the South African context dealing directly with women is the case of the rape trial of Jacob Zuma in 2006 as cited in a study by Kakhobwe in 2009. The focus of Kakhobwe's study is the examination of the state's judicial system which prejudices rape victims and denies them fair recourse. In her examination, she makes reference to how language constructs, especially within the formal legal context of the court negate the identities of women victims and perpetuate patriarchal domination in the legal domain and hence in society in general. In explaining the intersection between culture and language Kakhobwe explains that: "within many African cultures, there is no language that honestly conceptualises or even accommodates the concept of rape, what it involves, its implications and consequences" (2009: 27). The resultant position according to Kakhobwe, (ibid) is that in many African cultures therefore is one of non-existence of rape and the questioning of male sexual domination (ibid). Thus whilst the rape trial of Jacob Zuma in 2006 raised issues of cultural concepts and perceptions of sexual discourse, I concur with Kakhobwe that it was the use of language that resulted in the final outcome of the court which was that Mr Zuma was found to be innocent of the rape charge. One example of this in Kakhobwe's study is in her citing of the victim herself in the latter's reference to the judge's statements:
" And there is his pronouncements about my identity. Who am I. It is so strange to be sitting there like an onlooker, to hear someone telling you who you are. And none of it fits, is real for me. And here is this man telling me I am mad, unable to even know what is consensual and not; promiscuous, bisexual and not lesbian. (ibid: 38, 39). While this case was of great public interest because of its loaded political dynamics which were unfolding at the time, the use of language to discredit and devalue the victim and to finally arrive at the judgment, illustrates the manipulative power contained in language. However the fact that the victim sought legal recourse and stood her ground during the case, is an indication of her resistance to the power being wielded over her, as well as a realisation of her own power.

My reference to this case is its relevance to support groups. Victims of rape and abuse continue to abound because the state trivialises those issues or does not accord them

the import it deserves. Furthermore, it is at the support groups that such victims seek help because the state and its system do not seem to be offering substantive support. Of significance also to this research is the meaning and power attached to and derived from the state machinery responsible for driving the gender transformation agenda in the country: *Ministry for Women Children and Persons with Disabilities* (MWCPD). The previous organs responsible for children and disabled persons respectively, were incorporated into the women's ministry by the new president Jacob Zuma. Not only does the incorporation of these units dilute the potential for effective transformative initiatives in gender issues, it relegates the mandate of the latter to that of a 'disabled' status. The language also proclaims that gender and women's issues are not significant enough to warrant a separate machinery to drive its agenda; and therefore shares responsibility (and resources) with other marginalised sectors.

2.6   <u>CONCLUSION: LOCATING RESEARCH IN A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</u>

Against the plethora of tensions within feminisms and historically specific challenges in the country, the challenge for this research is to locate support groups within the South African context, in a framework which transcends both the confines and barriers of feminist theories, whilst simultaneously appropriating what is relevant from them. However, cognisance must be taken of the fact that support groups as referred to here, will not be devoid of challenges. It will be naïve to assume at the outset that such groups will be free of ideological and power conflicts and that these groups will serve as 'utopian spaces.' These are complexities which need to be addressed not necessarily here. To identify a theory that is valid and applicable within the dynamism of a twenty-first century South Africa becomes imperative. The application of poststructuralist theory to the context of this research, is therefore appropriate and valid as it (poststructuralism) is not confined to a single strand of philosophy or approach. Such a framework supports the complex, multi-faceted experiences of South African women. Poststructuralism also requires that many approaches be adopted if necessary, in order to understand a particular situation and to seek possibilities for change. This too is valid for a research of this complex context:

other theories of feminism may be used, not as universal claims, but in context to explain situations and to initiate change.

As mentioned earlier, different feminisms posed as barriers to the very aim which they sought to act upon, by the limiting nature of each; however each does have its contextual value which may be appropriated. A major criticism of feminisms is the focus on their differences which pose as barriers to change; and not on the possibilities of their collective agency for change. Poststructuralism offers possibilities for transformation which support groups for women present and can provide. It provides for understanding of women's positions in their respective contexts and empowers them to enable transformation for themselves and for the world / society around them. Within the context of twenty- first century South African society and the possibility of harnessing poststructuralist ideology, the articulation of feminists not conventionally perceived as post- structuralist, seem valid and useful. Such an example is that of Hill Collins (who is not conventionally perceived as a poststructuralist feminist) explaining how differences can serve to identify commonality: "Rather than emphasizing how a Black women's standpoint and its accompanying epistemology are different from those in Afrocentric and feminist analyses, I use Black women's experiences to examine points of contact between the two" (1991: 207). Ahmed also affirms the need to move beyond differences amongst (different) women's experiences and to seek ways in which to actively transform those different lives: "We need to think about how we can build new interpretations, or even better understanding of the connections between the relations of power, and between differences as they are lived and embedded in different spaces and places. Rather than merely alluding to the differences amongst women, we also want to ask how these differences may become the productive basis for different forms of activism" (2000: 99).

Within the post-apartheid climate in South Africa and legislations aimed at addressing gender /women's issues, the provisioning of support groups, as well as the dynamics underpinning their provisioning, Foucault's poststructuralist analysis of laws appears very valid: "Laws are traditionally set out only in negative terms. They put limits on behaviour and decide what is unacceptable. But laws rarely talk about what behaviour is desired. As a form of power, the law prevents, but does not specify" (in Fillingham

1993: 125). Fillingham cites another salient point made by Foucault which is of specific relevance to this research: "There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives" (ibid: 144). Thus one is compelled to question the aims behind legislation (seemingly) attempting to address gender issues in the country: Is this legislation only cosmetic intervention made to deceive people, to manipulate the truth, as per *other constructs* of those in power? This research will examine these issues- it is conceded however, that this (my research) too is a paradox because it is subject to my construct and my idea of truth, but it does provide for some understanding of the situation and system/s located within support groups.

The above statements are relevant within the South African context and especially within support groups. The many women who will solicit support from groups will constitute a myriad of different experiences and histories. The challenge will be not to negate these differences, but to harness these differences into agencies for productive and empowering transformation for these women. In asking whether women can find unity through diversity, McKay (in James et al. 1993: 280) articulates this position powerfully and unambiguously. Although she engages in feminist discourse within the American (US) context, her assertions resound within the South African context as well: "My emphasis on the political nature of what women need to do to reflect the acceptance of differences and the desire to create unity among themselves and other women is especially important for … academic women- one of the privileged groups in our society. Women … have significant roles to play in helping to bring our stated goals to pass, not only inside of the safe walls of our work space, but outside of them, in the world where other life occurs … we must stretch our minds beyond the boundaries of our offices and classrooms, beyond the next article we write for an academic journal, and beyond the covers of our next book" (ibid). She adopts a critical stance towards academia without any transformative and uniting agenda and advocates that professional advancement should also translate into action that advance the causes of understanding of women (and men): "Women… should act as moral agents for change. We must seek to transform our 'differences into more rational, power-conscious, and subversive' steps toward positive social change" (ibid).

In the same way the challenge for both women seeking support at groups as well as those providing the support, is to create new histories for themselves, histories which

serve to their benefit and not to their detriment; by transcending their differences and attempting to harness the power contained in them. The relationships constructed and experienced by women in support groups can be empowering and it is through that realisation and harnessing of power that women can transform their lives, as Foucault contends: "Power is not something that one 'has'… it is 'exercised' in actions, and is imminent in all social relationships" (in Beasley 1999:93).While the stance adopted in this thesis is to examine support groups and how they can move beyond differences towards collective agencies for empowerment, those differences cannot be negated or denied. Crenshaw (1993: 1242) argues that the ignoring of differences among women, especially within the context of violence against women, perpetuates these differences and renders collective mobilisation even more challenging. In analysing the different support groups identified here, I will also briefly examine how the identities of race, class and gender and what I refer to as *consciousness of context* intersect in the construct of abuse by both the women and groups at which they seek support.

This chapter has examined different theoretical frameworks in order to identify and locate a theory or philosophy from which this research may be approached, that being a feminist poststructuralist framework. The chapters that follow will involve a more practical application of this theory to this research as an examination of support groups and their discourse is undertaken.

CHAPTER THREE- Looking through the crystal[12]

A HISTORY OF SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG- from 1909 – 2012

> *They remove boulders, they cross rivers.*[13]

3.1   BACKGROUND

The multi-faceted oppression of women establishes a compelling argument for the need to support them in order to create possibilities for positive transformation in their lives. Various arguments have been made about the need for and benefits of the formalisation and provision of support and support structures for women (Padayachee and Pillay 1993, Commission on Gender equality 2001; Rasool et al 2002; Ramphele 2008). This chapter offers a concise chronicle of support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg and attempts to do so within the historical contexts of the city. The information presented here is concise because the intention is not to examine within detailed historical contexts each support group which has been identified, but rather to briefly list the support groups as they were formed. Thus mention will be made of those support groups which have been identified since the city's 'formal' genesis[14] to the present day. Brief descriptions of these groups will be given with an overall analysis of the evolution of support groups in the historical contexts. This chapter is not intended to contain an exhaustive list of support groups, past and present; the limitations inherent in an exercise of this nature are acknowledged. However, how support groups for women were constructed within the evolving discourse of the city and broader relations with the state, is the primary focus and this chapter will be approached from that perspective. The underlying factors for the establishment of support groups will be examined within historical contexts; these will be traced across the historical spectrum for common patterns and themes; and finally an examination

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[12] A reference to Richardson's comparison of qualitative research to crystals - 'crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions'(in Denzin and Lincoln 2003:8)

[13] Gasa- 2007: vii

[14] This is meant to refer to the period of formally recorded history of Pietermaritzburg as accounted by Haswell and Laband (1998: 24)

will be undertaken to identify differences. Fundamental to this is the role of the state within the various historical contexts.

The history of women and support groups in Pietermaritzburg is located within the history of the city; the development of women and women's groups in the city is integrally woven into the fabric of the city's development. However it is interesting to note that while the history of the city has been chronicled by historians, there is to date, no clear, separate documentation of the development of women's groups or women's history in the city. What is available is fragmented information about prominent women in the city, associated with women's groups which are contained in the archives of *The (Natal) Witness* and the *Alan Paton Centre* at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus. These archives serve as the main source of data of those organisations which are not in existence anymore.

The brief history of Pietermaritzburg cited here is as documented by historians Haswell and Laband (1998). Pietermaritzburg's recorded history commences in 1838 with the arrival of the Voortrekkers (Laband and Haswell 1988 : 24). That Afrikaaner settlement ended officially in 1843 with the arrival of the British (ibid:). After the founding of the city by the Voortrekkers, Pietermaritzburg was demarcated and developed along racially segregated lines, which continued after the British annexure. Indigenous people who came to live within the precincts of the settlement and who contributed to the development of the latter through labour or 'slavery' were allocated areas of residence well separated from the colonists. These people were allocated places in the south-west of the city in areas such as Edendale and Plessislaer. The Coloured population was concentrated in the upper Church Street area as well as in the 'Indian areas' below Retief Street and in Pentrich, Plessislaer and Raisethorpe. The central part of the city was mainly occupied by the White population, but later the bordering suburbs became the dominant areas of residence of this group. The 1870s saw the first Indians arrive as merchants and traders in the city after securing freedom from their indentured labour contracts. These Indians were allowed to live in the lower part of the city now known as Retief and East Streets. Later some settled in what became known as Plessislaer and Pentrich where they remained until forcedly removed later on by the *Group Areas Act* of 1950. With the Nationalist government coming into power in 1948 and the subsequent passing of the *Group Areas Act* in

1950, the initial demarcations were restructured, people were removed from their places of abode and segregation became institutionalised.

Pietermaritzburg's history is largely a reflection of the country's history. Its narrative of violence especially within the *apartheid* era,[15] is highlighted in the turbulence of the latter 1980s and early 1990s. Among the many people who lost their lives during this period of political instability were political activists such as Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo who was shot in 1991 and Reggie Hadebe who was assassinated just outside the city in 1992. In his autobiography Mandela refers to the violence which had gripped the city and which necessitated his personal visit and intervention in 1990: "In the meantime, Natal became a killing - ground. Heavily armed Inkatha supporters had in effect declared war on ANC strongholds across the Natal Midlands region and around Pietermaritzburg. Entire villages were set alight, dozens of people were killed, hundreds were wounded and thousands became refugees" (Mandela 1995: 689). The situation of that time is further elucidated by reports such as that of Kaunda (1993) in which he cites a report on the violence compiled by Anne Truluck[16] : "The violence in the Midlands and the rest of the country is a manifestation of low intensity warfare waged and encouraged by the State to weaken its opponents…"

The struggle against *apartheid* largely focused on the attaining of political emancipation and rights and parallel to that, economic emancipation. Other struggles and issues were subsumed by the struggle for political freedom. Whilst the social and economic scourges of *apartheid* have been theorised, the analysis of it from a gender perspective has not been accorded a similar level of import and attention. Written discourse on *apartheid* has been relatively prolific and includes such works as the narrative and personal experiences recounted by Mandela (1995), Krog's exposé on the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's* quest to bring about healing to a nation torn apart by *apartheid* (2000), Clark's analysis of the evolution of *apartheid*, its official demise but enduring effects on present day South Africa (2011) and a narrative history of the country documented by Giliomee and Mbenga (2008).

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[15] *The Natal Witness,* 06 July 1995
[16] *The Natal Witness,* 25 May 1993

 The imbalance which I allude to is articulated by Walker; her historical account and analysis of women and gender in the country being one of the relatively sparse offerings on the topic at the time: " One major difficulty noted… is the absence from the historical record of women's voices, most pronounced in the case of black women….. In the case of the great mass of women, documentary silence may be erroneously equated with historical passivity, or even worse, with historical insignificance, so that women simply disappear from our view of the past" (1990: 2-3). Whilst Walker in this study reclaims and asserts the existence and contribution of women in society throughout South Africa's history, in which women's history seems to be denied, what is of significance to me is the general absence of detailed records of women (and women's support groups) from the annals of history. The few general historical accounts of Pietermaritzburg as documented by Gordon (1981) and Laband and Haswell (1988) largely exclude women and their activities from the historical landscape of the city.

Thus much of the information contained here, especially of those organisations which do not exist at present has been obtained from *The Witness* archives as well as from interviews with women in the city. Making use of archival materials is part of research methodology referred to as 'unobtrusive measure' (Bryman 2004: 215). Unobtrusive measures refer to methods of observation of which the researcher is not directly part of or involved (ibid). Bryman (ibid) clarifies that while information such as newspaper articles serve as 'sources' of data, they also require analysis in order to be relevant within a social context. Of significance to this research is that this method of obtaining information was not intended to replace other more empirical, conventional methods, but was rather one which was employed due to the lack of conventionally available material or information on the subject, namely support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg.

As an individual undertaking such a project within my personal capacity and with limited resources, including the absence of a broader authoritative and power-wielding mandate to back up the location of sparse information from sources not easily accessible, I did find the exercise challenging. To emphasise my point, reference is made to Desai and Vahed who undertook research of the history of Indians in South Africa. In narrating that history Desai and Vahed (2010: ix) indicate

that they undertook years of rigorous research and acknowledge that in reconstructing the early years of Indian South African history, they relied primarily on sources from archives and libraries from many parts of the country. Implicit in their acknowledgement, is the challenging and arduous nature of their task, which was to relate as accurately and holistically as possible, the histories of the Indian indentured workers. Although their narrative contains a plurality of stories and documentation, it is by no means exhaustive; however it may be argued that their main aims are very adequately and competently accomplished. This reference to Desai and Vahed (ibid) is made to elucidate the challenges I had confronted in conducting my research and not because the focus of this research was on support groups for Indian women only. Further, the intention of this chapter is not to offer an exhaustible list and descriptions of support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg. Such a task is virtually impossible within the dynamics of this research and its aims. By carefully merging the pieces of information gleaned from *The Witness* archives as well as from interviews with women from groups, it is possible to construct a coherent, if not complete, history of support groups for women in the city of Pietermaritzburg. Such information subsequently offers significant insight into the developmental constructs and evolutions of support groups.

3.2   A CHRONOLOGY of SUPPORT GROUPS PRE-1994

The first organised women's structure recorded was the Pietermaritzburg branch of the *National Council of Women of South Africa* (NCWSA)[17] which was established in 1909 against the political turbulence of the time: "The 'Bambatha Rebellion' of 1906 reflected the increasing resentment of Africans towards discriminatory practices such as forced labour, land confiscation and taxation" (Clark and Worger 2004: 21) and the effects of the general economic recession experienced throughout Southern Africa (Haswell and Laband 1988: 128). *The South African Act* of 1909 which preceded the formal establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and of which Natal became part, contained several stipulations which discriminated not just on racial grounds, (voting rights were not shared by Blacks), but also along gender lines (white women were not given voting rights) (ibid: 21). The NCWSA was a multi-racial

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[17]*The Natal Witness*, 27 November 1982

organisation and was linked to the *International Council of Women*, recognised as being the first international organisation lobbying for women's rights (Rupp 2014). Whilst the NCWSA initially concerned itself with issues which disenfranchised women such as the omission of women from various Boards, Councils and Committees dealing with all issues of the city/country, it also extended its work to issues of general discrimination and unfair legislation in the country. In 1928 for example, it advocated for educational rights for 'non-European' children (Black children) and in 1937 advocacy was undertaken to amend the *Wage Act No. 44 of 1937* to include Black workers in industry and to have a minimum wage agreement established (Monro 1992: 2-3).

In its relatively long existence (79 years), the NCWSA formed or helped to form many organisations such as *The Pietermaritzburg Mental Health Society*, *The Child Welfare Society* and the *Pietermaritzburg and District Council for the Care of the Aged* (PADCA) (Monro 1992: 3). The group also organised workshops and seminars, compiled informative brochures and actively lobbied against legislation and practices which were considered discriminatory not just against women, but against society in general. Although its name does not identify its racial composition and there was interaction with other racial groups, the NCWSA was an organisation mainly for White women. Else Schreiner, who was a member of the local group and who later became National president, became synonymous with the national women's group.

The Pietermaritzburg Indian Women's Association was formed in 1929[18] and concerned itself with the plight of Indian women in the city. After securing their freedom from indentured labour contracts, Indians started settling in Pietermaritzburg from about 1870 (Haswell and Laband 1988: 170). Desai and Vahed (2011) document the struggles that Indian women endured during and after indenture and their subsequent attempts to forge new lives and identities in their new places of abode. Relocation to Pietermaritzburg was not exempt from hardships and a multiplicity of challenges. The Union was not shielded from the aftermath of the First World War which resulted in a global economic recession. Against this economic hardship, the general segregated political climate of the time and the social and

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[18]*The Natal Witness*, 29 February 2000

cultural discrimination against Indian women (Grundlingh in Giliomee and Mbenga 2008: 269-270), the *Indian Women's Organisation* served as a valuable support structure to the Indian women of the city. The support ranged from basic material aid in the form of food, social intervention and moral support to more complex educational and political intervention later on. Identifying literacy as a crucial tool of empowerment, the group advocated for the provisioning of educational opportunities for Indian women; and subsequently helped to found the Indian Girls High School in 1935 as well as the opening of the Woodlands High School to girls (previously opened to boys only).

According to Diesel (2004), the initial aim of the association was to "bring together Hindu, Muslim and Christian Indian women to work for the improvement of their lives through literacy and general education, thus encouraging them to become more active and responsible in their communities and the society into which they were born". The association later affiliated to the NCWSA and broadened its' activities to that of more economic and political interests such as the lobbying for the removal of taxation on rice (ibid). The political activism of the association subsequently intensified through its alignment and involvement with the *Natal Indian Congress* (NIC) which had been formed by Gandhi in 1894 and which had concerned itself with obtaining greater political rights for Indians (Clark 2004:18).

Durgha Bundhoo was one of the prominent women of that movement. According to Verbeek (1998) *The Pietermaritzburg Indian Women's Association* played a central role in the local activities of the Passive Resistance campaign which had been initiated by the NIC. Indian women not only 'sought imprisonment' but also provided support to those who were imprisoned or who had husbands or family imprisoned. Verbeek reports Bundhoo's claim that the association "concerned itself with everything… as there was always a lot to do" (ibid). A significant point is that according to Bundhoo, the association was able to be a source of support for Indian women and later through its association with women of other race groups, for all women, because of the women uniting and 'being together" (ibid).

The *National Council of African Women* (Pietermaritzburg branch) formed in 1937[19] by Mrs T Soga, was also formed against the backdrop of the political instability of the time and of specific consequences of legislated action on Africans and their lives, namely through the forced migration and exploited labour of Blacks as a result of the *Native Land Act* of 1913 (Clark and Worger 2004: 22) and the *Native Bills* which ushered in formalised segregation in the country through the establishment of separate government administration for Africans (ibid: 29). Thus, while the (African) men battled with formulating strategies to deal with the political situation as well as with leadership issues, the *National Council of African Women* sought to provide support to the 'struggle' on a social and welfare level through its support of women (Hiatywayo 1985: http:/ncaw.org./history). Although the NCAW had been formed as a social and welfare structure, Gasa states that there were tensions in the organisation arising from differing standpoints (2007:149). While some members believed that the welfare and social character of the group should be maintained, there were those who felt that the welfare component should be linked to political initiatives (ibid). These tensions which reflect the dominance of ideology on African women's lives seemed to have been maintained through to the 1990s preceding the country's transition to democracy.

In 1949 Violet van Wyk formed the *Pietermaritzburg Council for Coloured Women*.[20] This group initially assisted Coloured nurses in their training and later followed with the development of Coloured women in general in the city, through education, hospitalisation, assistance and social and welfare support. The group founded a nursery school for Coloured children in the Woodlands area, as well as the first Coloured school in the city.

The Black Sash,[21] was formed in 1955 by a group of White women with a branch being subsequently established in Pietermaritzburg. It initially protested against what was seen as the Nationalist government's removal of Coloureds from the voters' roll, but what it (Black Sash) claimed was more an "opposition against the manipulation of the constitution" (*The Black Sash* 1987: 1). The group continued as a voice of protest

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[19]*The Natal Witness*, 15 September 1988
[20]*The Natal Witness*, 09 July 1977
[21]*The Natal Witness,* 19 May 1990

against apartheid and its unjust laws. This included providing support through both monetary and legal advice to Black women who were then affected by the pass laws, protesting against the practice of detentions without trials and raising awareness about the atrocities of the *apartheid* regime in general, its discriminatory policies and lobbying for support against such discrimination (Duncan 2005: 7). According to Kleinenberg (2004) the 1980s saw the group form a sub-group which involved itself primarily with women's issues and included the provision of support on all aspects of rape, the drafting of educational booklets on the same topic, the education of women on their rights and socio-welfare skills. At present, the Black Sash is a non-governmental organisation which provides assistance to women mainly in the form of accessing legal advice and recourse. It is also seen as an advocacy body for gender rights especially lobbying the government.

The Pietermaritzburg branch of *LifeLine*[22] was established in 1972. This organisation initially provided social support to White Christian men and women and has since extended its service to all members of the public. Introduced to South Africa officially in 1968 after being started in Australia by a religious minister in response to the global turbulence and general challenges of society, the organisation intended the provision of empathetic support to people of all religions to enable them to deal with life's challenges which seemed overwhelming at the time. Internationally, at that time, the Vietnam War had far reaching implications and spawned a moral resurgence among people against the war (Peter 2000: 161). Locally, the Nationalist Party under the leadership of JB Vorster was re-elected and international pressure against the country was mounted (ibid:163), the Black Consciousness movement under the leadership of Steve Biko was launched against the arrest in the 1960s of Mandela and cohorts in the Treason Trial and the banning of anti-apartheid movements (Pityana in Stubbs 1978:12; Mandela 1995:232). Shubane et al. describe this period of South African history as a complex one with "draconian security legislation, influx control and other curbs on the movement of blacks and the lack of of black freedom" (in Giliomee and Mbenga 2008: 349). *Rape Crisis*, another support group established by a voluntary group of women in 1978, merged with *LifeLine* in 1999. Thus women, initially white, were provided telephonic counselling for social challenges; later the

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[22]*The Natal Witness,* 20 January 2003

group extended both its service and client base to include counselling for all forms of trauma and all race groups. At present much of the group's services are provided through face-to- face contact with clients.

In 1988 the *Crisis Centre for Battered Women* was opened and a 'haven' established to provide a safe, temporary shelter for abused women due to the high incidence of abuse of women in the city. A report[23] on the centre shortly after its opening quoted the then director as saying that he was 'astounded at the extent of mental and physical abuse of women in the city.' The centre was initially only able to cater for White women due to legislative restraints such as *The Group Areas Act*, but later became open to all race groups. Thus the centre provided a safe, clean refuge for abused women, as well as counselling to enable them to deal with their abusive situations and to formulate ways for forging their future lives.

The *Women's National Coalition* was formed in 1992[24] to unify women to formulate and adopt a charter entrenching effective equality for women in South Africa's new constitution. The Coalition which comprised women's groups and organisations nationally was represented at local level by various groups in the city, political, non-governmental and religious. Research which was undertaken throughout the country identified the needs and processes required to address gender inequality in the country. The culmination of that process was the *Women's Charter for Effective Equality* which informed the formation of the *Commission for Gender Equality* (CGE). The Midlands Region of the Coalition evolved into the *Midlands Women's Group* which provided support to women on issues ranging from social and welfare support, HIV and AIDS counselling, economic empowerment initiatives, as well as monitoring and lobbying government on gender issues. The group has been defunct for many years.

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[23]*The Natal Witness,* 06 February 1988; 10 February 1997
[24] Else Schreiner Collection 1994, *Alan Paton Centre* Archives

3.3   SUPPORT GROUPS POST-1994

The *Women in Need* (WIN) group was started in 1995[25] by Virginia Storm of FAMSA and provides support to women in the form of counselling for mainly domestic abuse and violence. The counselling usually takes the form of a series of sessions provided to groups of women, and is facilitated by women who had been abused previously and had undergone the counselling themselves.

The Justice and Women (JAW)[26] project is an initiative linked to the WIN service as well as to women in general. The project educates and assists women about relevant legal matters including legislation on child support and family law, domestic violence and accessing the courts. Mediation is also undertaken in domestic and family matters, as well as advocacy around family law and gender issues.

The *Gift of the Givers Careline* was established in 1997[27] by Dr I Sooliman as an extension to the humanitarian services which the group provides. The Careline provides support, especially in the form of counselling to women. Although *Gift of the Givers* has an Islamic-based ethos, the counselling offered for domestic abuse, rape, HIV and AIDS is offered to women from all religious backgrounds who seek help and support from the group.

In 2001 Ivon and June Grindley-Ferris established *Abrina Esther House*[28] which provides support to abused women in the form of shelter, counselling and skills training in the fields of sewing, woodwork, and computer skills to enable them to earn an income after their 'rehabilitation' at the centre.

The *Pietermaritzburg Gay and Lesbian Network* (GLN)[29] was established in 2003, initially to provide a social platform for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered

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[25] Storm, V. Founder of *WIN*. Interviewed by researcher, 02 February 1999, Pietermaritzburg; *The Natal Witness*, 20 October 2001

[26] Howard-Cornelius, A. Coordinator of Access to Justice Programme, *JAW*. Interviewed by researcher, 04 October 2011, Pietermaritzburg

[27] *The Daily News,* 17 January 1997

[28] Grindley-Ferris, J. Co-founder, *Abrina.Esther House*. Interviewed by researcher, 26 June 2011, Pietermaritzburg; Information brochure on Esther House

[29] Ntsabuba, A. Field worker coordinator, *GLN*. Interviewed by researcher, 28 October 2011, Pietermaritzburg

persons, as social facilities were non - existent for the gay community. The group expanded to providing more formal support by becoming the voice of representation and advocacy of people marginalised as a result of their sexual orientation. Thus the GLN provides support in the form of counselling and workshops to victims of homophobic crime, as well as undertaking advocacy for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersexed persons (LGBTI) through workshops, public activities, exhibitions, talks and community work.

Winning Women[30] was started by Esther Howard-Browne in 2004 initially as a gathering of like-minded White business women providing support to each other through the sharing and encouragement of their enterprises. This was later expanded to include all interested women, and although the group is underpinned by a Christian ethos, it serves to 'provide all women with a purpose.' The group aims to empower women in general aspects of their lives, as well as in relation to their communities as it perceives the articulation between women and their communities as crucial not only to their (women's) development, but to that of society at large. Although the group is predominantly white, women of other race groups do attend the bimonthly gatherings. Some of the group's activities include talks about personal relationships, equipping mothers on child safety and dealing with drug addiction in children. Whilst the Christian ethos is preserved and included at the gatherings, it is not the primary focus or dominant factor. The empowerment of women is enabled rather through a combination of approaches including the provision of socio-economic skills, together with religious teachings.

In response to the incidence of abused women in her community, Sumaya Chetty[31] started a crisis centre at her home in 2007. Although she has expanded the service to include men and children, the initial purpose was to assist women, through its *Sisters helping Sisters* programme. The services and support provided range from counselling for rape, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, to referrals to relevant sources of further help such as legal institutions, to providing shelter for abused victims at her home itself.

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[30] Howard-Browne, E. Co-founder and co-ordinator, *Winning Women*. Interviewed by researcher, 17 December 2011, Pietermaritzburg

[31] Chetty, S. Founder, *Men, Women and Children Crisis Centre*. Interviewed by researcher, 20 June 2012, Pietermaritzburg

Various groups have been established in pockets of rural communities to assist women economically, through the formation of and involvement of women in those communities in initiatives such as sewing, gardening and poultry farming. Examples of these are the Khanyisani Community Development[32] in the Vulindlela area, a basic sewing skills programme which was started in 1989 and the Siyazama Baking Club[33] in Swayimane which was initiated in 2002, through the intervention and support of the Department of Agriculture.

It is conceded that other groups which are not documented here may exist. During my research and interaction with women, I became aware that other groups for women do exist in the form of religious circles, social and cultural groups and spiritual gatherings. I was not able to obtain written data/ responses from these groups, but was able to glean that various forms of support were being provided to women belonging to the respective groups. The fact that it was not possible to identify and locate other groups, which may be providing invaluable services in the form of support to women is significant within the context of this research. Resources appear to mitigate against the mainstream advocacy of these groups and subsequent publicity, resulting in their not being very publicly advertised and known. Such an occurrence is in itself a paradox as women needing to access such support groups, may find those groups inaccessible, especially because of a lack of knowledge of these groups, as was evident in the findings of this research.

3.4   CONSTRUCT of SUPPORT GROUPS: AN ANALYSIS

Whilst the groups cited here may be differentiated on factors such as race, class and economics and indicate the many identities and constructs of women, I chose to group them into two broad categories according to historically specific time-frames: pre-1994 and post-1994 (with 1994 being the milestone year of the country's first democratic elections). The pre-1994 category may be further delineated into those groups formed during the early history of the city and those formed closer to 1994. While documented narratives show that women's groups were always in existence (see Walker 1990, Fester 1997, Hassim 2006, Gasa 2007) in the country and in

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[32]*The Natal Witness*, 10 July 2003
[33] *The Natal Witness*, 20 June 2002

Pietermaritzburg, analyses of these groups along historical contexts indicate shifts in their constructs and identities. Historical records and narratives of early women's groups in the country and in Pietermaritzburg show that they were formed along racial lines and were largely concerned with overtly political issues, especially political emancipation. The analysis therefore undertaken here, while intertwined with and reflecting the situation and historical constructs nationally, is intended to refer to the support groups in Pietermaritzburg specifically, for the purposes of this study.

Tensions in women's groups due to different perceptions of 'national issues' versus 'women's issues' presented challenges in defining women's primary foci and involvements (Fester 1997, Gasa 2007). However historical documentation of women and women's groups pre-1994 indicates that the concerns and identities of the latter were largely subsumed by the broader national political agenda of liberation whereby women's groups organised themselves parallel to political liberation movements and activities (*Council of Women of South Africa, The National Council of African Women, Pietermaritzburg Council for Coloured Women, Pietermaritzburg Indian Women's Association, Women's Coalition)*.

As the brief chronology indicates, the emergence of political liberation of the country in 1994 saw the identities of women's groups assuming different constructs. There was a shift in focus from political liberation to that of gender-specific issues and struggles. This 'deconstruction' in the identities of women's groups has seen a gradual increase in the formation of groups whose primary concerns are upliftment and empowerment of women through their social services provided.

As the history of Pietermaritzburg illustrates, early support groups for women were formed along racial lines, commensurate not only with the interests of specific groups, but also with the racially segregated political dispensation which prevailed. Within those contexts, it can be argued that the groups provided invaluable services to their constituencies and helped shape and contribute to the history which unfolded. Thus one sees racially specific groups rallying and attempting to provide support within the prescribed political parameters as is evident in the formation of the different racial groups (*National Council of Women of South Africa*, The *National Council of African*

Women, Pietermaritzburg Council for Coloured Women, Pietermaritzburg Indian Women's Association).

The feminist ideologies underpinning the constructs and identities of these early groups are not clear and I do not wish to make assumptions about their positions and attach feminist models to their identities. In writing about and commenting on early women's groups in the country, Gasa asserts that while the common aim of the different groups was emancipation, "this means different things to different people and in different periods" (2007: xv). She stresses this assertion by alluding to the subjective documentation of and interpretation of women's history: "…Some of this history remains suffused with ambiguity and defies a single, authoritative interpretation" (ibid: 129). Information available about these groups, both nationally and in Pietermaritzburg, does not suggest specific feminist affiliations, but a desire to actively organise themselves and render service to their communities and broader society. Whilst each of the four major races had support groups (nationally and in Pietermaritzburg), the identity of each group's organisation across the political spectrum, was influenced by the state, and were thus constructs of the state; as the brief narratives of the history of each group (undertaken in the beginning of this chapter) show how each was formed against the political landscapes of the time. The gradual involvement of most of the groups with explicitly political strategies and activities was also shaped by the state. These involvements evolved into full participation in political activities as was also outlined earlier in this chapter.

This resonates with Pringle and Watson's contention, that: "the state is a series of arenas or locales where interests are constituted and not merely represented" (in Gouws, 2005: 73). South Africa's history of violence and fragmented societies is all pervasive and filters densely down to the localised domestic context. Whilst domestic violence and abuse of women have been acknowledged as a global scourge (Hague et al. 2003: 2; Gouws 2005: 72), these afflictions are widespread manifestations of South Africa's violent landscape. Furthermore research has shown that those who suffer the worst consequences of the violence in South Africa in its many forms are women (Padayachee and Pillay 1993; *Commission on Gender Equality* 2001; Rasool et al. 2002; Ramphele 2008). Thus such acknowledgements reinforce the case for the formation and support of, support groups for women. Additionally, with the

evolvement of the political landscape in the country in general and in Pietermaritzburg specifically, it is not unreasonable therefore to expect support for women and women's support groups from the State, at a fundamental level.

According to Foucauldian analysis these support groups are the product of the manifestation of the state's power and the subsequent power relations between the state and the different racial groups (McHoul and Grace 1993: 39). The groups did not come into existence within a nebulous or arbitrary context, but rather as a result of "certain constraints, rules or conditions" (ibid). Thus the dynamics and nuances of each group were located within the specific historical relations of that group to the state. Grbich describes discourse as: "…dictating meaning and upon analysis may indicate the individuals or groups whose views have dominated at a particular point in time" (2004: 40).

The analysis of support groups undertaken thus far has applied to both national and the Pietermaritzburg contexts as, as was indicated earlier, the latter had mirrored the national landscape, especially politically. Thus all analysis undertaken hereon applies to and refers to those groups cited in this research. The deconstruction of the historical identities of the support groups referred to here, are manifestations of the changing dominant powers throughout historical contexts of the country and the city. Whilst the state evolved from that of an *Apartheid State* to that of a democratic one, location of power remains common across historical contexts i.e. within the state and it is that location of power that constructs support groups for women and their identities. This is concurrent with Manicom's (in Gouws 2005: 28) reference to a 'gender politics of transition' as: "a more historically-located and political one. It is maintained that differently located South Africans coalesced, and were actively mobilized, as a political identity around a shared place of exclusion from the political process."

Moreover, the support groups also raise questions about the discourse of gender power relations prevalent at those times. With the general lack of documented information about specific gender positioning by women, assumptions are made about what was perceived as critical to the different women along the historical spectrum, and that largely seems to be allegiance to political struggles. The provisioning of social and welfare support to women becomes blurred, and later subsumed with the

dominant focus of the time, that being the attainment of political and economic liberation. The intersection of gender issues with cultural and social constructs of these groups remains largely invisible within those contexts, because political struggle became the central and dominant focus as seems evident in the histories of each group. Much of women's value and identities are conflated within the discourse of political struggle. Most contemporary reference to and acknowledgement of women, inevitably begins with their involvement with and contribution to the political struggle. White women, especially who are mentioned in the annals of history, tend to be specifically identified as those who were consciously part of the liberation struggle in the city, as opposed to Black women who tend to be referred to as a homogenous group consciously involved in the liberation struggle. The intersection of gender with sexuality is a non-existent discourse in the historical annals of the city's support groups. It is relatively recently (2003) that this has been formally addressed through the work of the GLN[34].

South Africa's history of violence and fragmented societies is all pervasive and filters densely down to the localised domestic context. Domestic violence and abuse of women have been acknowledged as a global scourge (Hague et al. 2003: 2; Gouws 2005: 72). Research has shown that those who suffer the worst consequences of the violence in its many forms are women (Padayachee and Pillay 1993; *Commission on Gender Equality* 2001; Rasool et al. 2002; Ramphele 2008). However, it seems that focus on violence against women whether directly linked to South Africa's past or not, has only been consciously made post-1994 within formalised, legal contexts as is evident in the Gender related legislation and initiatives in the country. Responses to acts of violence against women pre-1994 appear to have been subsumed by political agendas of overall national liberation, the official attainment of such occurring in 1994. However the scourge of violence which permeated South Africa's past seemed to spill over post-1994. Violence against women was not exempted, but rather became a focus of attention, manifested in the country's Constitution and many other related legislation which attempted to deal with gender inequality and violence against women. Pietermaritzburg mirrors the acts of violence committed against women in almost all parts of the country.

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[34] Refer to narrative of page 55 of this thesis

The early groups formed in the first half of the 1900s for the four major race groups, to provide support to women in Pietermaritzburg, within the political turbulence of a repressive regime are at present non-existent for obvious historical and political reasons.

The groups which emerged just prior to 1994 then advocated for broader social justice and equality for women. Against the backdrop of expectation from change and the promulgation of the new constitution, women's groups seemed to have positioned themselves from the contexts of broader political emancipation to that of gender-specific struggles and empowerment. The seemingly 'conscious shedding' of broader political involvement was replaced by the commitment to pursue the previously relegated cause of women. Thus those groups which emerged close to 1994 involved themselves with advocacy, education of women and lobbying government on gender issues. The *Midlands Women's Coalition* is a primary example. The constructs of these groups seemed complementary to the promised delivery by the State on gender issues. The evolution of the *Women's Coalition* into the *Midlands Women's Group* indicates the historical shift in focus of the group that further supports a sense of expectation from the state. This resonates with Pringle and Watson's (in Gouws 2005: 73) contention that: "Inherent in the state is the organisation of power relations that determine how women are constituted as subjects and as citizens. The practices of the state construct and legitimate gender divisions and identities through the law and public discourses that emanate from the state."

However, critical analysis of groups in existence around 1994 (the country's official transition to democracy) to those in existence at present, reveals a distortion or deviation in what may be perceived as the expected evolutionary or transformative path of support groups. The general expectation and fervour which seemed to have underpinned support groups then seemed to have waned to individual group's resignations to acceptance of what each can provide and achieve. The support of government previously promised through legislation and political rhetoric, seems detached and removed from the contexts within which these support groups operate and are active. The fact that all the support groups presently in existence and who have been referred to in this research, are NGOs support this assertion; as well as the

feedback provided by the former about the support provided to them by government (as will be cited in chapter five of this thesis).

The two groups which had been established prior to 1994, *Lifeline* (1972) and *The Haven* (1988) seem the only groups (from those referred to in this research) still to be in existence at present; however their identities, structures and services have seen much change since their inception. From providing support services mainly to White women, their client base is mainly Black (African). This is in itself a paradox, as the quest for political emancipation had largely been based on the principles of equality for the most marginalised racial group, the Black African population. Whilst the attainment of political freedom in theory seems ironically to have drawn back the heavy curtain to reveal the extent of women's oppression and violence against them, the years since that political emancipation do not indicate much progress in the addressing of that violence and gender disparity, hence an increase in the number of Black women seeking support. Thus it becomes clear that the dominant discourse of the state, metamorphosing from the *Apartheid* state to the present-day *Democratic state* impacts fundamentally on the construct of groups for women. The latter has also evolved according to the shift in discourse of the state, from being essentially groups concerned with liberation politics to groups being more aligned with the (new) state to groups concerning themselves with social issues in stances seemingly detached from the state.

The country's first national gender summit held in August 2001, aimed to measure progress of the *National Gender Machinery* (NGM), to identify gaps in the implementation of gender equality initiatives as outlined in the *Women's Charter for Effective Equality* and to re-chart the way forward from thereon (Meintjies:2001). Reports from the various sectors of government and non-governmental organisations were presented in relation to these aims of the summit. Madonsela, representing the Department of Justice criticised the *Gender Machinery* for its lack of effective advocacy around the judicial system and women, as well as for the gap between policy development and implementation in justice (ibid: 64). The analysis of the information received from the support groups identified in this research will serve as cogent indicators of the progress made in the ten years since that summit, not just

within the judicial sector in the country but in all spheres which impact women and their lives.

The *Women's Charter for Effective Equality* (1994) makes constant references to support services being created and made accessible for women in need of the same:

> 'there shall be legal protection for all women for …. all forms of abuse and assault…Facilities, staffed by trained personnel, where women can report all cases of criminal and other abuse, and undergo the appropriate examination and treatment, shall be provided by the state… there shall be accessible and affordable shelters and counselling services for survivors of rape, battery, sexual assault… the state shall establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effective protection and promotion of equality for women, which shall be accessible to all women in South Africa …a variety of mechanisms must be available for women as individuals and as groups to influence legislative change which affect their lives' (*Women's National Coalition* 1994: 15).

In 2006 a parliamentary initiative provided for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to assess the efficacy of those institutions which were established to promote the various facets of Human Rights as entrenched in the *Bill of Rights* in the *South African Constitution* of 1996. These institutions, of which the *Commission for Gender Equality* (CGE) is one, are known as the Chapter nine institutions in reference to their entrenchment in chapter nine of the constitution. In its report tabled before parliament in 2007 the committee noted with regards to the CGE that its mandate was to address specifically, the serious oppression and discrimination experienced by women in South Africa from a context extraneous to the broad culture of political freedom which underpinned the country's transition to democracy (Report of the ad hoc Committee on the Review of Chapter 9 and Associated Institutions, 2007). The report indicated that while great strides had been made legislatively with regards to addressing gender issues, gender inequalities remain deeply embedded at all levels of society. In short the commission had failed on its constitutional mandate: "As such, it strongly believes that the Commission represents a lost opportunity as until now it has failed to engage in a sustained and effective manner with the policies, approaches and mechanisms to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and to promote gender

issues in South Africa" (ibid: 150). The report attributed the poor public awareness of the Commission as shown by a 2002 study indicating only 27% of women nationally had heard of it, to its overall failure. This lack of public awareness and advocacy undermined the Commission's credibility and efficacy (ibid: 163). Of significance is that while the report cited internal deficiencies as a contributing factor towards the Commission's poor performance, many of the root causes of its poor performance such as low budgets, delays in appointments and lack of clear legal and constitutional mandate are located within the legal responsibility of the State.

It is not surprising therefore to note that all the support groups or organisations identified in this research, are non-governmental organisations. All of the groups identified in this research which are currently operating (with the exception of *The Haven* and *Lifeline*) were established *after* 1994 and operate mainly independent of any relationship with the state. The expectation of delivery as the country's democracy matures sees an opposite effect in the number of non-governmental support groups being established: there seems to be an increase in the number of NGOs established. This phenomenon indicates not just the need for support groups, but the absence of state intervention in this area of need. The support groups operating at present are concerned with overtly social and economic issues regarding women. The intersection of these issues with political concerns seems diluted or relegated to secondary concern. There is a reversal of concerns amongst women's groups from pre-1994 to post-1994 from a consciously political one to that of more social initiatives. Furthermore, whilst initiatives of support groups pre-1994 were located within the broader action of other groups sharing the same cause (political emancipation), as was evident in the formation of the *Women's National Coalition*, the initiatives of post-1994 groups, although sharing same concerns, seem to be located within isolated domains as each of the support groups seem to operate independently of each other, although they share common services and goals.

Of significance to me are the constructs of these groups within their power relations with the state. Prior to 1994, women and women's groups, for example *The Black Sash* and The *ANC Women's League*, consciously contested and challenged the state, albeit within an overtly political agenda. Challenging the *apartheid* regime seemed not just critical and a necessity but also a laudable stance. However, the stance post-

1994 seems a diluted, almost neutralised one in relation to the state. While it is still the state that informs the constructs of women and women's groups, the focus of these groups is not to challenge it (the state) overtly. In the light of the seemingly absence of state intervention, they seem to forge ahead with their agenda and become agents of their own transformation.

Whilst such strategies may be perceived as resistance to the state's stance and the claiming of their own power (Weedon 1997:107), they raise questions about the state's commitment to addressing issues, as well as the positioning of women's groups in relation to the state. Gouws (2005: 73) refers to this change or shift in the state as a 'reconfigured state' due to its structural change as well as its changing relationship with civil society. Women's groups create their own spaces within which to forge their own agenda. This is contrasted with the approach taken by individual women who are in positions to thrust the agenda of women's groups into more public spheres, but do not. Hassim (2006:263) asserts that many women in positions of power who are part of the ruling party seem not to want to contest and challenge the state for fear of jeopardising or compromising their own positions in government. Furthermore, whilst it seems that the establishment of 'independent' support groups are the result of needs in communities, it is also attributed to an overt lack of the state being challenged and held accountable to deliver on its mandate. The present responsibility of the state becomes blurred against the struggles of the past and it seems that groups become disempowered to challenge it when set against that backdrop of historical struggles.

3.5   EVIDENCE of POSITIVE INTERVENTION by SUPPORT GROUPS

Whilst documented studies on support groups are relatively scarce, especially in South Africa, those case studies which deal with support provided through groups, have indicated encouraging and positive findings.

International Studies on Support groups

Hague et al's research into support groups and their users in the United Kingdom critically analysed the services provided by support groups and centres for women and

posited recommendations for improvement in those services in order to fundamentally empower women and construct new possibilities for their lives (2003).

Other international studies include that undertaken at two Canadian universities which evaluated support groups for victims of domestic abuse. Tutty et al (1993) stated that the study: 'revealed substantial benefit associated with group participation. Significant improvements were found in self-esteem, belonging support, locus of control, less traditional attitudes towards marriage and the family, perceived stress and marital functioning. Unexpectedly, clients living with their spouses also reported significant decreases in physical and non- physical abuse.'

Research undertaken at the University of California, Berkeley, on the Influence of HIV related Support groups on survival in women who lived with HIV, found 'group participation to be associated with increased longevity' as well as, that 'social support influenced survival time' positively (Summers, 2007).

African and South African studies on support groups

Kohi (2004) found in a study conducted among women with cervical cancer in Tanzania, that those who had been allocated to and exposed to support groups demonstrated significantly higher positive conditions of physical well-being, social and emotional well-being and functional well-being in contrast to patients who had not been exposed to the interventions of support groups.

In South Africa, a study conducted at the University of Pretoria into the effect of support groups on HIV-positive women, found that those women attending the support group presented significant positive change after attending the support group as opposed to those who had not attended the support group. It was found that "group dynamics, including interaction amongst staff and clients were important variables in influencing success of the group" (Visser and Mundell, 2008).

Hlongwana (2004) found, in a study in Durban of a support group for people who were HIV- positive and living with AIDS, that "group members, especially women, view support groups as safe areas for disclosure and emotional healing."

At a more local level Palmary (1999) expounds on the dynamics of support groups in her action research conducted with support groups at the Family and Marriage

counselling centre (FAMSA) in Pietermaritzburg. As a facilitator of one group comprising different racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, she was able to experience first-hand the impact that the group had on the women who attended. Although Palmary approaches her research and analysis thereof from a psychological perspective, what is significant to my research is her acknowledgement of the positive effects that attending the support groups had on the women referred to: "The support group provides the opportunity and creates the space in which one can begin to see oneself differently… It allows us to see the self as changeable and in so doing provides a space for action" (ibid: 79).

The impact of women's groups on participants was also examined in a participatory research conducted by Giorza (2001) on a small business cooperative in a rural area outside of Pietermaritzburg. Giorza states that one of the objectives of the women's group was the achieving of both personal and economic empowerment of the women by using a gender sensitive training methodology. She describes the impact of the group on the women: "the various evaluation processes conducted do indicate success in the area of personal empowerment" (ibid: 33). In her examination of the learning process, she refers to the value of empowerment that goes beyond monetary value: "the value of creating income, needed to be re-examined in the light of our other more important value of empowerment" (ibid: 37). She articulates the significance of personal development enabled by the group: "In a context where global and national policies erode the capacity and livelihoods of people in the third world and of rural women in particular, personal empowerment is an important asset in their struggle for better conditions" (ibid: 38).

All of these studies indicate the positive influence and benefit that support groups can provide. The reasons for the women seeking support in the respective groups, are not the significant factors in my referring to these case studies but the positive, empowering result of the interventions of the groups.

Conclusion

I concur with Hassim (2006: X) that formal scholarship of women's organisations in South Africa is sparse, as she discovered when she conducted research into women's

organisation in South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. Her research however, indicates positive experiences for those women involved: '… many women found it much easier to be involved in community-based women's organisations' (ibid: 52). She cites the case of one woman, Veni Soobrayan, who indicated that her experience with a women's group was 'very fulfilling''' (ibid: 56). Hassim's explanations of the tensions between women's issues and national liberations are similar to Fester's account. She does confirm however, that women in groups which dealt with more personal issues, or which allowed for more personal issues to be discussed rather than national, political issues, felt safer, open and empowered to do so. Similar group dynamics and experiences seem prevalent in more recent studies of group or organisation interaction and support in South Africa as was outlined above.

Whilst the case studies referred to here comprise of a diversity of support groups the underlying empowering principles of those support groups are the same, as is briefly described in each case study. All of these cases indicate positive and transformative results for those participating in them. This confirms the hypothesis that support groups can serve as agents for transformation and empowerment for women by providing them with the space in which women can not only heal themselves from abused pasts, but more importantly transform and forge new lives for themselves.

This chapter has attempted to describe support groups which have been identified in the city, to locate and examine their constructs within their historical contexts and thereby to trace their involvements and provisioning of services. I have shown how support groups have evolved from overtly political contexts and concerns to more social initiatives. I have also briefly cited cases of support groups, which support the argument of the need for and importance of support groups for women.

The chapter analysing information received from groups which are presently active, examines and outlines in greater detail the relationships (if any) between them and government. The intention later is to also examine the validation of government's proclamation to redress gender (women's) issues seriously in the country through its support for support groups and women at 'grass roots' level.

CHAPTER FOUR –"Viewing the truth"

RESEARCH INTO SUPPORT GROUPS

The cause of women's emancipation is part of our national struggle against outdated practices and prejudices. It is a struggle that demands equal effort from both men and women alike.[35]

4.1 METHODOLOGY- INTRODUCTION

The aim of research and the information solicited guides the research approach and methodology. This research aims to investigate the efficacy of support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg. In order to make valid findings and assumptions about the aims of this research, it is necessary to employ a variety of research instruments as well as target multiple sources of information. The veracity of the findings is not of quantifiably measureable variables but located within interpretations of social constructs. According to Denzin and Lincoln, "qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is researched, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" (2003: 13). Mason (1996: 3) describes qualitative research as using a variety of research tools that are able to explain the lives of individuals. The nature of this research is thus situated within a qualitative paradigm. A qualitative approach is also more commensurate with a poststructuralist philosophy which underpins this research. As researcher, I am aware that in bringing to the research my subjectivities and constructed meanings of the topic "through critical, self-reflexive enquiry" (ibid) others are going to construct their meanings. The construction of meaning arises from the subjective interpretation of research methods, as explained by Mason: "Qualitative research is ... grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly `interpretivist' in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced ... based on methods of data generation which are flexible and sensitive to the social" (1996: 4). Kelly further describes interpretative research and analysis as that which uses different perspectives to make sense of text, whilst

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[35]Mandela 2011: 273. Address to the National conference of commitments: Gender and Women Empowerment, 1996

closer contextual analysis (insider) may be used, but also an analysis from a more removed perspective (outsider) is used (distinciation) (in Terreblanche and Durrheim 1999: 400). He expounds on the need for balanced inquiry through considering parts of text in relation to the whole so that clearer meaning and interpretation is gleaned (ibid: 407). In this research, I have examined data from various sources separately, and then analysed and interpreted the data collectively.

I have sought to investigate in this research, the efficacy of support groups for women and the extent to which they act as agents of empowerment for women in Pietermaritzburg. In conducting this investigation the cogent issues examined were:

- the publicizing of the support groups / structures identified and advocacy of these support groups / structures
- the actual support given to women and the impact that this support has on women's lives
- the correlation between legislation and actual implementation regarding these support groups / structures
- the support provided to these groups by government
- the constraints experienced by these groups which mitigate against more successful services being provided eg. financial and human resources
- legal constraints which mitigate against the services being provided fully and effectively

In describing challenges when researching violence against women, Rasool et al. contend that information collected is dependent on many factors (2002: 8): "Methods of collecting information about violence against women have varied depending on who is collecting the data, the funds and time available, the reasons for doing the research, and the level of social and political interest in the issue."

The aims of this research have informed my research methods which included different questionnaires for different contexts, interviews, advertisements and statistical data and information. According to Neuman (2011: 164) this employment of a *'triangulation'* process: "… builds on the principle that we learn more by

observing from multiple perspectives than by looking from only a single perspective." Thus my intention in drawing on the feedback, experiences and perspectives from a range of women and contexts is to enable me to present as well-evidenced findings as possible of support groups. Although the research used quantitative instruments of statistics and quantities of responses, the primary focus was on the qualitative techniques and analyses. The quantitative instruments employed in the form of the police statistics obtained were to enhance the qualitative findings of the research and not to serve as independent measureable quantitative data. Thus this use of a *'triangulation of method'* (ibid: 165) aims to support and complement each method used. This is commensurate with Mason's (1996: 4) suggestion that: "qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual and detailed data. There is more emphasis on `holistic' forms of analysis and explanation in this sense, than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations. Qualitative research usually does use some form of quantification, but statistical forms of analysis are not seen as central."

All the research methods and instruments used in this research are linked to the central issue of support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg. Although each method has its unique approach, they are all interconnected and serve to contribute to the eventual understanding of the issue, a characteristic of qualitative research as maintained by Denzin and Lincoln: "Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand" (1994: 2). Each of the instruments/ methodologies will be identified, rationales for their use offered and descriptions of each methodology provided. Analysis of each method will be undertaken with an overall, integrated analysis at the end of this chapter. Limitations of the research instruments will also be discussed.

4.2   PERIOD of RESEARCH, SAMPLING and METHODS

The actual research was conducted during the period April 2011 – April 2012 although the newspaper advertisements had been placed in the latter half of 2010 in order to commence the research process. Much of the information about support groups in the city, especially of those groups which are non-existent at present were obtained from archival records. Making use of archival materials are part of research

methodology referred to as 'unobtrusive measure' (Bryman 2004: 215). Unobtrusive measures refer to methods of observation in which the researcher is not directly part of or involved (ibid). Bryman (ibid) clarifies that while information such as newspaper articles serve as 'sources' of data, they also require analysis in order to be relevant within a social context. Of significance to this research is that this method of obtaining information was not intended to replace other more empirical, conventional methods, but was rather one which was employed due to the lack of conventionally available material or information on the subject, namely support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg. Among the many advantages of unobtrusive methods cited by Kellehear (1993: 6), is that those of archival records can be followed and analysed over long periods of time, without the initial records being changed or altered. It was such an advantage that enabled me to obtain some information about support groups or organisations non-existent at present and of which information is not easily available.

The size of the sample of each method and instrument used in the research is indicated in the description of and explanation of each, accordingly. A variety of sampling techniques were employed in order to access a wide spectrum of respondents as possible while simultaneously attempting to mitigate constraints present in a research of this nature. Thus the 'convenience sampling' technique (Walliman 2001: 278) was initially used in the distribution of questionnaires to the public whereby questionnaires were distributed to those respondents or people whom I had immediate access to. Thereafter the 'snowball technique' was adopted (ibid: 279) whereby those initial respondents were requested to distribute questionnaires to those that they had contact with, including women from their respective communities. A 'theoretical sampling' technique (ibid: 279) was used in requesting information from the support groups visited as these groups were best positioned to provide first-hand information about the services rendered to women. As indicated previously, the research was conducted using mainly qualitative design and analyses. The use of a quantitative methodology in the form of statistics from the local police services of reported cases of women abuse has also been explained in the introduction to the methodology.

4.3   POLICE STATISTICS

Statistics of abused women for the period July-December 2010 were obtained through the *KwaZulu Natal Detective Services of the South African Police Services* for the 13 police stations within the Pietermaritzburg precinct (refer to Annexure 1). Using statistics as part of research methodology is a form of 'unobtrusive measures' (Bryman 2004: 215). Unobtrusive measures refer to methods of observation in which the researcher is not directly part of or involved (ibid). The statistics referred to here had to be obtained from the source mentioned, that is the Police Services; as such information is regarded as sensitive and classified and not directly available for public scrutiny in South Africa from other sources. The purpose of obtaining these statistics is to establish the correlation between reported cases of abuse against women, the interventions made in those cases and the final results of those cases and interventions. Another salient purpose of obtaining the statistics was to establish the incidences of situations which warranted women seeking help or support. Although the information was solicited in 2011 from the relevant Police Services, the actual information / data provided was for the previous year (2010). This was due to the process adopted by the relevant unit whereby all information from each of the police stations is collectively compiled annually for the previous year and, due to its sensitive and confidential nature, is stored centrally at the *Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit*; thus the process of collating these statistics, while necessary, is laborious and time consuming. Hence information for the current year (or the year requested for in this research, 2011) not being readily collated and available.

4.4   ADVERTISEMENTS in LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

An advertisement soliciting information about support groups in the city, was placed in two of the local and community newspapers, *The Witness* and *The Maritzburg Sun,* running for the weekend of the 22 October 2010 and the last week of October 2010 respectively (annexure 2). The dates of the advertisements were not significant but rather the aim of obtaining information from women about support groups, the former not being confined to any time frame or period. The aim of this was to try and reach a broader audience beyond what could be targeted through deliberate and premeditated

action such as asking people directly at given times to fill in questionnaires. It was also envisaged that readers could respond at their leisure and not feel pressurised for more 'immediate' reaction; that also through word of mouth and interpersonal communication, the request could be disseminated. Importantly, it was also intended that I would then become aware of support groups, which were not known to me, through the active responses of the relevant women. In addition, information could also be provided to me about the public awareness and knowledge of support groups for women in general. Lee (2000: 67) cites Halala's assertion that "personal advertisements are a useful source of information about individuals' interests and choices." Thus such information, it was intended, would contribute towards the understanding and analysis of support groups and the related aims of this research.

4.5 REQUEST to RADIO STATIONS

A similar request to that placed in the newspapers, was made to the two radio stations with the largest listenership in the province (and which thereby included Pietermaritzburg), in July 2011, and which includes the two dominant languages in KwaZulu Natal (English and isiZulu). The stations are *East Coast Radio* and *Ukhozi FM*. The rationale for employing this methodology was similar to that of the advertisements.

4.6 QUESTIONNAIRES

As indicated the aims of this research have informed the research methodologies used and the various data sources. Therefore questionnaires were used to obtain information from different sources about support groups for women as well as women's experiences of and knowledge of the latter. The application of a triangulation methodology (Neuman (2011: 164) in the use of questionnaires was to obtain responses from interconnected sources on the subject of this research in order to ensure credible and reliable findings.

4.6.1   Questionnaires For The Public

Questionnaires (360 in total) designed to obtain information about public knowledge of support groups, were distributed to women using a simple stratified sampling technique (Walliman 2011: 186) whereby intended respondents fell into different categories such as academic status (students and non-students), race groups, geographical location and age groups. The period during which these questionnaires were distributed was April 2011- April 2012 (annexure 3). Questionnaires were first distributed amongst those I had immediate access to and interaction with, my students (at the local public FET College) both in full and part time classes, my colleagues and women I interacted with in routine contexts. Thereafter questionnaires were handed to some of these individuals (students, colleagues and acquaintances) to distribute to women that they knew and or interacted with. The aim of this questionnaire was to find out whether women chosen from the public sphere as described, were aware of the existence of support groups, whether they had used the services of the same, and their attitude and perception of the state's stance towards support groups for women. A further aim was to establish a link between the knowledge of the public about support groups with the services (and information) of the support groups in order to examine the reach of the latter.   The targeted respondents intended representation of women from a broad cross-section of the city's population including geographical location, race, age, academic status and economic status.   That technique ensured the utilisation of a stratification sampling technique whereby attempts were made to elicit responses via the questionnaires from suitable numbers of subsets of the total population of women in order to ensure broad representation of respondents and their responses (Mouton 2006: 191).

The total of the 360 questionnaires were distributed as follows:

Female staff at two campuses for them to fill in	15
Part-time studies staff member for women in her community* to fill in:	10
Students in full-time classes for women in their communities* to fill in	150
Female students in part-time classes for them women in their communities to fill in	50

Neighbours for them and their colleagues to fill in	10
Domestic worker for women in her community to fill in	10
Friend to distribute to learners at school at which she teaches, to distribute to women in their communities	30
Sister to distribute to learners at school at which she teaches, to distribute to women in their communities	30
Worker at (my) home (for over 10 years) to distribute to women in his community and place of work	60
Staff at supermarket which I frequent for them and women in their community to fill in	10

*'community / communities' refer here to the places in which these people

reside or came from at the time the questionnaires were distributed

4.6.2   Questionnaires for Support Groups/Centres

Neuger (2001: 85) contends that there are different ways to help the different groups of women who seek help. She goes on however to state: "Yet with a culture that is increasingly unwilling to provide listening ears, it is often difficult for a woman to find a context that helps to 'hear her into speech" (ibid: 86). With the assumption that support groups provide a listening ear and more, I have sought to examine its veracity. Eleven support groups, (as referred to in letters of consent in annexure 1.2 of this thesis) were identified in the city, some through my previous knowledge of them. I became aware of the other groups through referrals and the public media, including the electronic media/ internet. A questionnaire was handed to the manager or coordinator of each group soliciting details of the centre/group and its services (annexure 4). Nine of these groups were first visited in July 2011. Contact was made with the directors of the other two groups in December 2011 and June 2012 respectively (after becoming aware of the latter's existence). Follow-up visits and contacts were made to all organisations ranging from one visit to four visits or telephone calls regarding my initial request.

Information was solicited from those directly linked to the subject of the research. The aim of this part of the research was not to just identify support groups for women in the city, but to examine the services of each group, to establish the modus operandi of each, including strategies of advocacy, to understand the constraints facing the groups and finally to establish the link between the public's knowledge and perception of support groups with the latter themselves. Consequently, a significant aim was to establish the articulation between the operations of these groups and the state and its related machinery in terms of its official responsibility and undertaking. My contention that the dominant discourse of the state on gender issues impacts crucially at the level of local support groups, will be explored fully in the next chapter, hence the need to obtain information from these groups. Moreover, an examination of the support groups provides an opportunity to chart the evolution of support groups in the city as well as to interrogate the extent to which women (support groups) are agents of change.

4.6.3   Questionnaires for Clients from Support Groups

Questionnaires (annexure 5) requiring feedback from women /clients on the service/support they had received were handed to each of the centres referred to in 4.6 after initial interviews or explanations were conducted with personnel from the centres. Ten questionnaires each were left at each centre but after most of the latter indicated challenges with that number being filled in, a request was made for a **minimum** of two filled and returned questionnaires from each group/centre. The aim of this was to establish the correlation between the two parties' (women/clients) claims and the veracity of the centres' claims about their services.

4.7   INTERVIEWS with PERSONNEL from SUPPORT GROUPS

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006: 289): "The basic individual interview is one of the most frequently used methods of data gathering within the qualitative approach…It is an open interview which allows the object of study to speak for herself rather than to provide our respondent with a battery of our own predetermined hypothesis-based questions." Thus semi-structured interviews (Boeije 2010: 62) were conducted with personnel (managers / coordinators) from each centre/group, and

these informed the written submission from each centre. The interviews were intended to introduce the research to the group/centre, to locate the research and to present the research instruments (questionnaires and requests for interviews with clients). While the interviews introduced the written information on the questionnaires, they provided information about the groups/centres themselves. Open-ended questions according to the specifications of the questionnaire (Mouton 2006: 253) were asked in order to allow the dynamics and discourse of each group/centre to unfold naturally through the language and constructs of the interviewee. This flexibility is referred to by Neuman as a *'conversational interview'* which is collaborative and social in nature (2006: 341).

4.8   LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH (INSTRUMENTS)

4.8.1   Police Statistics

Research shows that many women do not report cases of abuse to the police (Padayachee and Singh 1998; Rasool 2002; People Opposed to Women Abuse-POWA 2010[36]). It may thus be assumed that the figure supplied by the relevant section of the police services, does not reflect the actual number of incidences for the period in question. Legal sensitivities around public access to police information meant that information provided was of a general nature and not specific to individual cases; the lack of detailed demographics impeded the relational analyses amongst variables, as well as more informed conclusions about the situations of the women who reported their cases to the police stations.

4.8.2   Questionnaires

Although open-ended questions allow for subjective responses, the constructed nature of questionnaires can prevent and limit the provision of information and participation. The various questionnaires (refer to annexures) were constructed according to what I had perceived as valid and salient and could be perceived (by others) as 'leading' or 'loaded'. Kelly sums this up aptly: "More often we try… to be true to the voices of the researched yet trying to answer our research questions" (in Terreblance and Durrheim 1999: 8). The questionnaires may also be perceived as excluding other

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[36] Cited in a report by *Women in Action*, August 2010

perceptions of respondents as well as other positions of view. The language used in questionnaires can limit information and participation as a result of a lack of understanding or misinterpretation by respondents. The academic nature of the language used in the questionnaires could result in some potential respondents not participating in this form of research as a result of a lack of understanding of the contents. The language used could furthermore result in selective responses being provided in that certain questions may be answered or responded to and others being ignored. Notwithstanding these constructs of questionnaires we are reminded by Kelly that: "because we ask particular questions does not mean that the account is 'any account.' We ask our own questions but cannot make up the answers" (ibid: 412). However, questionnaires do remove the more personal contexts of interaction and fluid discourse and also can result in a poor response rate.

4.8.3   Convenience sampling and snowball techniques

Although this presents a convenient way of obtaining information, it is conceded that it limits the possibility of wider range of responses and respondents.

4.8.4 Advertisements in newspapers and radio stations

While these methods locate the subject of the discourse within the public domain, the response rate can be poor and therefore limit interpretation and analyses of the information.

4.8.5 Accessing support groups

Groups that may be providing support to women such as cultural and religious organisations may not be included in this research. In researching cultural dynamics in the abuse of women, Boonzaier and De La Rey (2003: 1014-1016) found that while religious and cultural organisations provided support to abused women, the former perpetuated gender and cultural inequalities by not only citing religious beliefs as justification for the abuse, but encouraged women to return to their abusive environments. It is conceded that this research is limited from the specific perspective of the dynamics of support provided by religious and cultural groups.

4.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS about RESEARCH and METHODOLOGY

Denscombe states that "researchers have a personal history and a personal identity that is likely to affect the purpose of the research" (2002: 34). He expounds further that "feminist researchers … seek the empowerment of women by taking a distinct perspective which addresses women's issues from a female perspective using appropriate methods" (ibid: 36). While acknowledging the limitations in this research, I have employed methodology which I believe relate to the key issues of the same. The interconnection between the methods and strategies is a use of 'multiple interpretative practices' – the use of many methods to gain insight and knowledge on the subject (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). These serve to construct a collective response to the questions asked in this research which is undertaken in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE - unpacking 'the truth'

RESULTS OF RESEARCH- THE FINDINGS

> *Like a butterfly perched for a moment and sometimes longer, I linger and hear the pain of women. Trance-like I watch as emotions unfold, stories told, voice at last* [37]

According to Foucault, 'truth' is subject to individual perception and experiences of power (in Veyne 2008: 74). I agree with his assertion that there is no absolute truth and thus commence this chapter with an awareness that much of what will be provided here as analyses will be what I perceive as 'truth.' Furthermore, my analyses here will be located within the findings, as provided in the previous chapter.

In this chapter a summary of the findings of each method with the significant details is provided. Thereafter examination and analyses of these findings will be undertaken. Where reference is made to them, the actual words used by respondents are quoted in order to prevent or minimise distortions in representations.

5.1   METHODS used in DATA ANALYSIS

An interpretative, reflexive approach is used to analyse the data in order to evaluate and construct meaning of the latter as well as to offer critical strategies for transformation for gender issues (Grbich 2004: 71; Denzin and Lincoln: 2003). As there is no 'single interpretative truth,' creative interpretation of the relations between the different situations and data, are constructed (ibid). Whilst giving meaning to the information and data collected, I am aware of limitations of subjectivity and the need to construct the presentation as closely as possible to that of the subjects' while interconnecting and linking all the information. Silverman states that whilst documentation is produced, it also produces or constructs information as well (2011: 79). Therefore, responses to the different questionnaires, as well as the questionnaires themselves were read and viewed carefully in order to interpret the information, language and semiotic indications. In addition inductive reasoning was used where

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[37]Gany in Meer (ed) 2010: 64

conclusions have been drawn based on supporting arguments and evidence (Mouton 1996: 77). A narrative method of explaining the data and findings is used to construct and present the findings as closely as possible to their representations (Holliday 2007: 132).

5.2 <u>POLICE STATISTICS</u>

<u>The reported cases for the period in question were as follows:</u>

The data source of the information analysed here was the statistics provided by the Warrant Officer of the *Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit* of the *KwaZulu Natal Detective Services of the South African Police Services.* [38]

The total number of cases reported (by women) during the identified period July-December 2010 was 249 and comprised mainly of rape, sexual assault, domestic violence and cases dealing with violations of the *Children's Act* of 2005, for example the abandonment of a child. Of these, more than 50% of the cases were for rape and 17% respectively for domestic violence and sexual assault. 70% of the victims were African and 30% make up the other race groups; the majority was unemployed.

All reported cases of rape involving both minors and adults, are referred to the *Child Advocacy Centre* (CAC) which has trained counsellors. Cases may then be referred to other support agencies for further invention and assistance. Cases of domestic abuse and violence may be referred to The *Family and Marriage Society of South Africa* (FAMSA) and if warranted, women are referred to 'places of safety' until their cases are officially closed. Of significance is that the organisations most referred to are non-governmental organisations. Referrals are made to the relevant government department for social intervention. The relationship between the two state organs will be explored further, together with the challenges facing the police services in rendering assistance to afflicted women.

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[38] For ethical reasons and as per the conditions (annexure 1.1) under which the information was provided by the Unit, the information provided may not be cited in its actual form here. That information will be available in the storage archives as per the ethics policy of the UKZN.

5.2.1   Analysis of data

Whilst the number of cases at the support centres suggests that many women do not begin soliciting support at police stations (average of 630 women per month at the 11 support centres collectively **versus** 249 at the police stations for six months), but chose rather to go directly to the respective centres, the statistics of the police services confirm firstly, the prevalence of crime against women, and secondly, that support structures and services to deal further with those incidences, are needed.

The statistics provided indicate that most of the crimes are committed in informal settlements and against Black African women. This confirms that it is yet those who are on the marginalised sectors of society and who already are at a disadvantage through a lack of access to basic, material resources and infrastructure, whose human rights are further violated. The use of statistics in research falls within 'unobtrusive methods' (Kellehear 1993: 3-7; Bryman 2004: 215). While acknowledging the advantages of unobtrusive methods, Bryman (2004: 214) and Kellehear (1993: 7) caution against the veracity of some original data/ records which they argue can be distorted or hidden. Bryman (ibid) states: "Where there is widespread recognition and acknowledgement that problems remain with certain forms of official statistics (in particular those relating to crime deviance), each set of statistics has to be evaluated for the purposes of social research on its own merits." Thus the data provided to me, whilst acknowledged and appreciated, contains I believe issues of contention and are located within discourse of language, power and subjectivities. The data itself seems relatively low and does not seem consistent with the national claim of frequency of violence committed against women, by for example, information provided by POWA (People Opposed to Women Abuse)[39] What was provided to me was not just the subjective construct of what was perceived to be acceptable and knowledge for public scrutiny and analysis, the data as well as the letter of consent with conditions and meeting held with the relevant authorities indicate the language constructs of power relations contained in this encounter (clause 2 of annexure 1.1). It becomes clear where power is located and wielded. However, that I can analyse the data and interrogate the process, indicates that power can be mediated (Foucault in Simons

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[39] POWA (People Opposed to Women Abuse) 2010. *Statistics on Domestic Violence in South Africa*

1995: 82). Whilst the officer responsible for providing the information did indicate to me that many cases of abuse and violence against women are unreported, the issue of information being constructed does raise concerns about the subversion of knowledge.

The telephonic respondent, who had initiated the support services for women victims at a local police station, had recognised the need to provide pastoral, psychological support beyond the clinical technicalities characteristic of the administrative routine of reporting and opening cases. The lack of resources* available to the police service itself mitigate against its ability to provide more effective and broader support to women lodging incidents of crime committed against them. The lack of resources* range from basic material items, such as refreshments to women who usually have to spend long hours at the police stations or at other places during the preliminary administrative process, to a lack of equipment and human resources. Lack of proper training of officials* results in improper treatment of women or the provisioning of inadequate services. The lack of training is also largely indicated in the language used to negotiate the situations at the police premises; often women are made to look like they are the perpetrators, or worthless or have 'solicited' the abuse; they are largely rendered powerless.

 The official place of safety for women is situated in Dalton, relatively far from Pietermaritzburg and this not only hinders the provision of support, but also questions the state's seriousness to dealing with and making resources available (such as adequate shelters) for those women whose situations warrant it. According to information from the officer, the police service is challenged to render the service it is legally and technically mandated to provide. Therefore its ability to render any broader forms of support is problematic. The scope of broader support rendered requires liaison with other state services such as the social services and that, according to the police source, is fraught with challenges as the former does not provide much assistance and its support of the initial work done by the police is limited or non-existent. While there are some positive outcomes from liaison with and referrals to the state organ that provides legal assistance, social intervention and assistance from the relevant state organ is lacking. Although it is not part of their official mandate, the

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*as per information provided by Officer from Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit

police services secure better support and assistance from liaison with non-governmental organisations: the support groups for women.

The official mandate of the police services is to provide security to citizens. Rendering that service requires it to liaise with and make referrals to other state organs. The disjointed structure and functioning of state organs see responsibility being vested in the police services for social welfare services of citizens (women); as is evidenced in the incidences of women seeking assistance for social matters at police stations. While there has been much public discourse about the police services, the same intensity of scrutiny has not been placed on the social services of the state, in whose jurisdiction lies the responsibility of intervention for abused women. It appears rather that the police services are held more accountable for social interventions. All cases of rape are dealt with by one unit of the police services (whether involving children or adults), who then refer the victims or survivors to the *Child Advocacy Centre*. Such contexts indicating how power is exercised over women through relational constructs (Weedon 1997:20), have implications for South African feminist practice. What needs to be asked is how can these existing constructs be transformed in order to empower the women who seek help and not to perpetuate 'victim' and helpless mentalities.

5.3 FEEDBACK from ADVERTISEMENTS in LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

Six women responded positively to the advertisement, although I had stated in the advertisement that I would undertake the cost of calls should respondents contact me via mobile phones. Two of the callers belonged to support groups for mothers with little children and for those who had lost children through death, respectively. Whilst both had indicated that they gained immense support from their respective groups, they were not aware of any other pastoral support groups for women. Two callers felt that although they had not personally required the services of support groups, there was a definite need for them; and also that the government was not doing enough in that regard. A fifth caller[40] who had used the services of a few support groups, was critical of both support groups as well as the government's role in providing adequate

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[40] 'Barbara' – whose story is cited in the conclusion of this thesis

services and support to afflicted women. The sixth respondent had been centrally involved in setting up a support service for women at a local police station when they came to report and open cases of domestic abuse and violence there. She had undertaken that service of her own volition, driven by her desire to impact positively on the lives of desperate women she encountered at the police station. She shared the opinion that support services crucial for women, were not being given the attention they warranted, from the state. Her altruistic desire, like those of many other women, resonates with Neuger's explanation of her involvement with pastoral counselling and support of women: "We need to be able to help women gain confidence about and language for the challenges they face. .. And we need to be able to help women make the kinds of choices and connections that assist them to gain and maintain greater satisfaction and richer life options" (2001: ix). Subsequent to the respondent leaving the station, the services have been withdrawn and are no longer provided, due to constraints, the details of which will be examined at a later stage.

5.3.1   Analysis

Lee (2000: 67) cites Halala's assertion that "personal advertisements are a useful source of information about individuals' interests and choices." Lee further states that personal advertisements reflect views of the advertiser about others (ibid). I further believe that responses to these advertisements, including 'non-responses' can also reflect views of the respondents to the advertisements as well as of those who 'do not' respond. Therefore assumptions may be made about the relatively poor response to the newspaper advertisement. One of the reasons is similar to that offered by a member of the public in response to a request to fill in a questionnaire (4.4) and that was that 'people don't like filling in questionnaires.' Different motives and principles may seem to underpin these two requests. Filling in a questionnaire may be construed as a random act related to an issue which may not be linked to one's personal life and experiences and may therefore be seen as intrusive. Responding to a public advertisement involves one's own volition and may not be as intrusive as a direct request to fill in a questionnaire.

 Whilst I assumed that *some* readers who were involved with and also experiencing what the advertisement referred to, would respond actively, it is possible that people

were indifferent to the request or issue at large. It is also possible that those readers, who would have responded favourably, did not see the advertisement/ request. Furthermore people may not be interested in other people's activities, especially activities of a personal, academic nature which seemingly do not or will not impact on their lives. This kind of behaviour is affirmed by Rasool's assertion that information obtained is also dependent on the level of (social and political) interest in an issue (2002: 8) and my research did result in responses from both groups and individuals indicating non-interest in the issue. Whilst financial constraints also mitigated against more frequent and longer running of the advertisement, I appreciate and accept the subjectivity of the context; that individual readers constructed their own meanings of what they read and that those meanings were not necessarily commensurate with mine.

Another reason for the poor response rate could also be located within the stigma that is attached to women abuse. Despite it being highly prevalent, discourse around it is secretive and kept from the public domain by abused women (Rasool 2002: 27). Therefore responding to the advertisement could have been constructed as disclosing identities.

Another variable of this finding was the racial composition of all six callers. All six callers were of the same race group. While the number of callers may not be an adequate sample to make theoretical conclusions, it does raise the questions of how different groups of women construct discourse of abuse and support and the urgency and import attached to the issue, as well as the subjectivities which influence women to participate actively in transformative agenda: what are the discourses of power that influence such participation? While additional input would have been useful in supporting the data obtained for this research, it is my contention that the lack of response to the newspaper advertisements did not impede both this research process and its outcome. This assertion is supported by the feedback of *all* six callers/ respondents that support groups were greatly needed, that there was a lack of such groups in Pietermaritzburg and that the State did not seem to be providing adequate support to those groups.

5.4 REQUEST to RADIO STATIONS

My requests to the two radio stations did not yield any positive outcomes/ responses from the latter and an analysis of this is included in the section dealing with challenges experienced in the research (6.2).

5.5 PUBLIC RESPONSE to QUESTIONNAIRES

Of the 360 questionnaires which were distributed, 120 completed or filled questionnaires were returned to me; one of which was discarded as only the first part (personal details) was filled in. The respondents have been grouped into two categories: those that had sought help/the services of support groups and those that had not sought help/ the services of support groups. Eight respondents fall into the former group and 111 fall into the latter.

The various findings are indicated in tables, using the following key:

RACE GROUP
A - African; W- White; C- Coloured; I-Indian

MARITAL STATUS
M- married; D- divorced; S-single; C-common law partner; W-widowed

RELIGION
C- Christianity; H- Hinduism; I-Islam; T-Traditional religions; N-none

GENERAL KEY
Y- yes
N – no

5.5.1 Women who had attended support groups (eight):

VARIABLE	AGE GROUP				RACE GROUP		MARITAL STATUS			RELIGION	
DESCRIPTOR	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	A	I	M	S	D	C	H
NUMBER	2	2	3	1	6	2	2	5	1	6	2

Six respondents were Black African and two were Indian. Seven of the eight women were employed. Two were educators, two were receptionists, one was a filing clerk, one was employed as an administrative personnel, one was a cashier and one was employed at a bakery. Amongst them, help was sought from support groups for domestic abuse (2), general counselling (3), legal assistance (2), general information (3), financial assistance (2), trauma (2) and medical assistance (1). The reasons provided by the women for seeking support overlapped, for example, the respondent who sought help for domestic abuse, also received counselling. All eight women indicated that the support obtained was beneficial to them. The positive outcomes are also indicated in the following responses:

How did the support change or affect you/your life?

> A support group helps you to become stronger and more alert (sic) about your situation. No one will ever again abuse you.

> Was able to talk about problems.

> It is very good to help other people.

> I learnt I don't need to be shy about it especially after I've fainted. (reference to medical condition)

According to them, outcomes of the intervention of the support groups included the development of their self-esteem, the ability to make more independent decisions and take legal action and the ability to find employment. Five indicated that the state was not doing enough regarding support groups. One didn't indicate whether she felt the state was doing enough or not. Although two indicated that the state was doing enough, their other responses seemed to indicate otherwise:

> More advertising/information about support groups is needed.

> There is a need for support groups.

The age groups of the women indicated the use of support groups across the age spectrum. The majority was single and occupied 'low income level' jobs. Whilst there has been some discourse on women and 'higher level' jobs, the discourse of lower level female employees such as cashiers, packers and cleaners remain invisible.

 Four of the women indicated that they were told about the support groups, two of whom, said they were told about the groups by their company/at work. Four said they were told about it by family/friends. The two who were referred to groups by their companies were for domestic abuse, legal assistance and financial advice and for trauma respectively. This raises the issue of work power-relations and discourse for 'low income' employees and the extent to which referrals are made for the employees' empowerment versus company productivity and 'harmonious' functioning. The relations between companies and support groups and shared interests of women's welfares, need to be investigated. While it is appreciated that the companies in question referred the specific women to support groups, it raises the issue of how class and race intersect in abuse. The women from more privileged backgrounds and employment were able to access the support groups through the relative privacy and preservation of their dignity through the intervention of family and friends- people within their personal spaces. Those women employed in lower level economic jobs would have had to endure further indignity and abuse by having their personal experiences brought into the public domain of work and resonates with Crenshaw's differentiation between structural intersectionality and political intersectionality as cited by Yuval-Davis (2006: 194) : "Structural intersectionality pertains to the ways in which the location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender makes our actual experience of domestic violence, rape … qualitatively different from that of white women. Political intersectionality relates to the manner in which both feminist and antiracist politics have functioned in tandem to marginalise the issue of violence against women of colour."

It would seem that the women from the lower economic classes especially have been subjected to 'political intersectionality' as most state departments and big corporations have or are supposed to have in-house employee assistance programmes, that practice is not compulsory of all businesses or employers. Thus women of less privileged economic classes tend to be even more marginalised with regards to

accessing crucial (social) support. Although this research does not focus on the complexities of support and religious institutions, it is significant to note that the variable of religion did not feature in the support mentioned; that, although the women indicated that they believed in a religion, support obtained was from seemingly secular groups. One woman who was an educator sought help for domestic abuse, thereby confirming research that women abuse occurs across economic, class and work levels.

5.5.2   Women who had not attended support groups (one hundred and eleven):

VARIABLE	AGE GROUP							RACE GROUP*				EMPLOYED **	
DESCRIPTOR	19 &<	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 >	A	I	W	C	Y	N
NUMBER	8	59	23	12	6	2	1	91	13	4	2	65	44

* one did not indicate** two did not indicate

VARIABLE	MARITAL STATUS					RELIGION			
DESCRIPTOR	M	S	D	W	C	C	H	T	N
NUMBER	25	76	5	2	1	92	13	4	2

The feedback obtained from women who had attended support groups was all positive in that they all indicated a need for such groups. The employment and marital statuses of the women indicate that the need to solicit support is not confined to or determined by age, economic or social group or status. The same deduction is made from the information and statistics obtained from the other sources of this research. Although the majority of respondents were African, single women between the ages of 20-29, the profile of the remaining women confirms that help from support groups is solicited from women across the racial and economic spectrum.

The assertion that there is a need for support groups is made on the basis of the common patterns of feedback obtained from all the sources here. A total of 61% of

women indicated that at some time they needed the services of a support group (this percentage includes the eight women who had attended groups). The figure of 80% that indicated that they did not know of any support groups, contrasted with the 97% (including those who had attended groups) that indicated that there was a need for the same:

Have you ever wanted/needed to attend a support group?

YES	NO	DID NOT INDICATE
64	44	3

Do you know of any support groups?

YES	NO	DID NOT INDICATE
19	89	3

Do you feel that there is a need for support groups for women?

YES	NO ***
108	3

***
But felt that more information is needed
that the government is not doing enough
one indicated that she needed one and didn't know of any (incongruent responses like this will be dealt with later under the section dealing with challenges of the research)

Comments from respondents which articulate the lack of knowledge of support groups also contain references to gender oppression:

> Women support group is more important to everywomen (sic) so that they can see the potential in them, so the government should provide enough support for these groups.

> Many people lack information about support groups for women, so there are taking it for granted. There should be more information to be given to the people.

> Women do need support groups because most women get abused, sexually, emotionally and physically. Most women do not want to talk about these issues, because they have no one to trust or talk to and they're scared.

Support is useful because those who have been abused (sic). Most of them get help from the support group.

I suggest that there should be HIV and domestic abuse (sic) support in our community the youth is still uneducated about HIV and lot of young women are abused by their loved one's people they most trust.

Many women lack self confidence due to a variety of circumstances however (sic) they are not aware of where and how to access support groups.

The dominant themes emerging from these responses are that, whilst there exists a clear need for support groups for women, many of them are unaware of such services. A significant factor which also emerges from these responses is that these women, who have not sought help from any support group or centre, clearly identify the need for the former. They also cite reasons why they think that support groups will be of benefit to them. Implicit in the responses are that support groups provide opportunities for empowerment and change.

Responses from the three who indicated that there was no need for support groups, seemed to contradict their other responses, for example by stating that they felt more information about support groups should be available, as well as that they felt that the government was not doing enough in supporting groups for women. The response from one that she had needed the services of a support group also contradicts her indication of there being no need for support groups. Incongruent responses such as these are dealt with in the section dealing with challenges of the research.

78% indicated that they felt that the government was not doing enough.

Do you feel that the government provides enough support for support groups?

YES ****	NO	DID NOT INDICATE
22	87	2

****
but felt that more information about support groups is needed
that there is a need for support groups
most of these respondents indicated 'YES' to all questions - which indicated a contradiction in responses

Some of the detailed responses included:

> Government is not providing enough support groups. Many support groups must be formed because there are many women out there who have needs but no one is able to meet their needs.

> I suggest that Government should provide support groups for womens (sic) because they are destroyed abused with different ways. And those support groups must be offered without any payments.

> This would be a good idea and should be regarded with highest importance due to the fact that there people in desperate need and who just ended being depressed and have nervous breakdowns all of which can be avoided. There should be places like this the areas where it is easy excessable (sic) maybe cost free if not a minimum charge.

Whilst these responses indicate that the respondents see the government as having the responsibility to provide support groups and their related services, they identify the government as falling short in its responsibility. Of further significance to me, are the constructs of the responses. Whilst the language usage is not of the highest or correct grammatical standard, the words indicate strong emotion and sentiment towards support and support groups for women.

Those that indicated that enough was being done by government contradicted themselves with their other responses, as indicated earlier. Once again religion did not feature as a supportive factor as the majority of women needed support, did not know where to find support, but had not solicited help from religious organisations. The fact that 59% of the respondents were employed, but indicated a need for support groups, is commensurate with my assertion that solicited support is not confined to employment or economic status, and that many women who are employed experience abuse. The lack of knowledge of support groups which prevented the majority of women from obtaining support and possibilities for empowerment reflects social constructs which enforce and perpetuate the disempowerment of women. The latter are required to negotiate challenging contexts in dominant male-shaped discourses

without support of resisting agencies such as support groups. However, the seeming complicity of the support groups in this situation reflects paradoxical complexities in their aiding the disempowerment of women- by the apparent lack of public information. This hypothesis will be examined further in the analysis of the feedback received from the groups.

5.6 RESPONSE FROM SUPPORT GROUPS

Nine centres/groups provided feedback. The names of the groups have been identified by alphabets here for legal and ethical reasons.

Summary of support groups

GROUP	SERVICES PROVIDED	TRAINED PERSONNEL	AVERAGE No. of WOMEN SEEN PER MONTH	PROFILE of WOMEN / CLIENTS
A	General information Medical information and assistance Counselling for rape, gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS, relationships, depression, suicide, stress	Y- 20	100	All race groups but mainly Black All marital status Income level is mainly low, unemployed Both parental status Ages from 12-55 years Educational level mainly matriculation Religion mainly Christian Much cultural influences
B	General information Employment assistance /advice Counselling for domestic violence, divorce, marriage, bereavement, relationships	Y- 3 full-time staff; 20 trained volunteers	150	All race groups All marital status Both parental status All age groups All educational levels All religions

C	General information Employment advice Counselling for domestic abuse, rape, HIV and AIDS, marriage Temporary shelter for women and their children Find schools for affected children	Y- 5	5	Mainly Blacks and Indians Unemployed All marital status Both parental status Mainly 19-40 years All educational levels Mainly Christian, Muslim
D	General information Medical assistance Employment advice Counselling for abuse, sexual abuse, relationships and general life issues	Y- 4	25	All race groups Employed; unemployed All educational levels All age groups All religions
E	Counselling for domestic abuse, sexual abuse, rape, emotional abuse Employment assistance Accommodation for abused women and their children	Y- 3	30	Black Mainly unemployed Mainly single Most are parents Mainly 15-30 years Low level of education No religious affiliation
F	Legal advice Employment advice Counselling for rape, domestic abuse, marriage, relationships Food aid	Y-13	130	All race groups All employment status All marital status Both parental status 18-60 years All religions
G	General information Legal advice Counselling for legal matters, maintenance Debriefing and referrals to other support services eg. social welfare, healthcare	Y-4	20	85% Black; 10% White, 5% Indian 75% unemployed, 25% employed- low skills jobs Mainly single, divorced Parental status is mainly with children Age group is 20-70 years Range from no formal education to degrees/diplomas Religion is mostly Christian, some Hindu and Muslim

H	General information Counselling for domestic violence, rape, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse, HIV and AIDS Referrals to other support services Provision of life skills Temporary shelter for abused women	Y-2	50	Indian and Black Mostly parents Unemployed, employed, housewives 18-6- years All educational levels All religions
I	Religious/ spiritual guidance Business Networking opportunities and support Social support Counselling for any life situation- provided as required Life skills Referrals to other support services	Group is coordinated overall by one person and managed by a committee of 7	About 120 women attend bi- monthly gatherings	Mostly White Mostly educated Mostly employed Mostly parents 25- 70 years Mostly Christian

5.6.1 Summary of Responses from Support groups

Over 500 women in total seek assistance from the support groups referred to here collectively per month (excluding the women who attend the bi-monthly meeting of the one group). This is a relatively high number when considering that many other women who may have wanted help, were unable to do so as a result of not knowing about these support groups. Attendance at these support groups is mainly due to referrals by other state and social agencies.

General advocacy of these groups is confined mainly to newspaper advertisements by some of the groups, thus excluding those women who may not have access to such media.

How do women become aware of the group/centre?

A	Through the media eg. *Echo* newspaper, distribution of pamphlets, word of mouth
B	dvertisements in local newspapers, referrals from other people, word of mouth
C	Referred to by social workers, police, churches and other NGOs
D	By word of mouth (especially members of support group), media, including electronic
E	Referred to by other groups eg. Lifeline, FAMSA, Child Welfare
F	Referrals from other agencies, police services, courts, advertisements
G	Referrals from other organisations, by word of mouth (woman to woman)
H	By word of mouth, police, other support services eg. Lifeline
I	By word of mouth, advertisements, electronic communication

While it seems that many women are not able to access the services of support groups, the assistance and intervention provided to those women who are able to access the groups for a wide range of issues (as indicated in the tabular summary) centres/groups has resulted in positive outcomes as is evident in the following responses:

Describe the success rate/changes to women's lives after attending the group

A	Women make better choices; take responsibility for their lives and health; empowered to take action; cope better with traumatic event; able to take HIV preventative medication and measures
B	Women are given a voice; they are empowered; are able to cope better with situations eg. marital situation
C	Women become self-confident; able to do something about their lives eg. job hunting
D	HIV + women feel safer; help women to become better and stronger; women are empowered to fight for themselves
E	Women learn the Gospel; they know their Rights; success difficult to gauge
F	Women appear more positive; better self-esteem; able to make better decisions
G	Women report feeling free after getting divorced, getting maintenance, accessing social services-through the intervention of the centre
H	Women are more empowered; are equipped to deal with their situations better
I	Women feel more empowered; spiritually stronger; able to cope better with life's challenges

These indications are commensurate with the feedback received from women from the general public who had actually received support at centres. The positive and empowering outcomes of interventions by support groups indicate the valuable service that they provide to effect change to a marginalised sector. In that regard they may be seen as agents for transformation.

Of significance is that whilst all the support groups felt that there was need for more support groups, all felt that the state was not doing enough in supporting these groups as is indicated in the responses to the following questions:

Do you feel that there is a need for more support groups for women?

ALL nine groups indicated 'YES'

Do you feel that the state is 'doing enough' in supporting support groups for women?

ALL nine groups indicated 'NO'

These sentiments resonated with that of the public respondents.

The responses to the question about funding / how each groups is able to sustain itself financially, further confirms the assertion of the absence of the State's involvement and support of support groups:

How is the group/centre funded?

A	**Mainly from international donors; fundraising activities; some from Social Development Services**
B	**Donations, independent fund raising**
C	**Independent donations; government subsidy**
D	**Mainly independent donors; fundraising**
E	**Social Development; independent fundraising**
F	**Mainly through independent funding**
G	**Mostly through international donor grants; small funding from local donors eg. National Lotto and Community Chest**
H	**Is self-supporting**
I	**Through fund raising initiatives, self-funded through bi-monthly meetings, sponsorships and donations**

These responses also reinforce the common major challenge facing these groups, which is funding:

What are the problems faced by the group/centre?

A	**Funding; transport money for survivors/victims; lack of support from government, structural problems**
B	**Centre is not able to undertake home visits when requested to do so at times; liaison with other government services can be difficult and time consuming**
C	**Mostly financial; lack of finances it is not possible to conduct capacity building programmes for the women at the centre**

D	Financial constraints; internal problems eg. confidentiality among members
E	Funding
F	Funding
G	Only few women are helped due to few lawyers willing to do 'pro bono' work; emergency shelters are not well maintained but the centre still has to refer clients to them
H	Lack of funding
I	No problems experienced

The problems / challenges experienced by the groups are dealt with in greater detail in section 5.9.

5.6.2 Summary of responses from Clients of support services

Responses were received from 23 women in total who had received support or help from five of the groups listed.

Summary of responses from clients of support services:

A	Feedback not received		
B	7 filled questionnaires received- 1-6 C-1	Women experienced mainly domestic problems, violence, divorce	- found the support helpful - described the facilitators as very caring and very helpful - became aware of their rights after receiving help - developed self esteem - all indicated that they were unaware of other support groups
C	10 filled questionnaires received- A-10	Went to centre mainly because of domestic abuse and violence; one experienced depression; one was homeless	- all found the support helpful - described facilitators as very helpful and caring - one indicated that her child was able to be helped - all indicated that they were unaware of other places/support groups - became aware of centre/groups through friends, relatives, social workers; one became aware through the media
D	4 questionnaires received- A-1 I-1 C-1 DNS-1	Experienced sexual abuse, rape, needed support for HIV + status	- found centre/group very useful - described facilitators as very helpful and very caring - developed self esteem - able to be open and confident about sexuality - able to deal with HIV status - became aware of group through friends and other members of group - one indicated that she knew of other support groups
E	Feedback not received		

F	1 questionnaire received- A	Experienced domestic abuse	- found the group beneficial - described the facilitators as very caring and very helpful - indicated that sharing her story helped her feel safe - referred by police services - not aware of other support services/groups
G	Feedback not received		
H	Feedback not received		
I	1 questionnaire received- W	Was in an abusive relationship	- found group very beneficial - described the facilitators as very caring and very helpful - was able to deal with life after attending support group - became aware of group at work - is aware of other support groups

While all the centres indicate that their services are provided to all race groups, racial demographics of users seem to indicate an alignment of race with groups seemingly associated predominantly with a particular race group, for example, the group with an Islamic-based ethos had mainly Indian women coming to them for support whilst one group with a Christian-based ethos had mainly white women attending the group. This raises the issue of how women users construct their perceptions of groups and interconnects with possible variables of security, culture, accessibility.

The majority's indication of not being aware of other groups corresponds with the majority indication of respondents from the general public of not being aware of groups/centres. This questions the advocacy of the groups. Significantly the common reason for seeking help was for various forms of abuse in relationships. This corresponds with findings of previous researches (Rasool et al. 2002; POWA: 2010), and brings into focus the role of the state and its machinery in dealing with this scourge. However, the users of all groups provide positive feedback as indicated.

5.7   INTERVIEWS WITH PERSONNEL FROM GROUPS

As indicated in the previous chapter, semi-structured interviews were conducted with personnel or managers from each group (Boeije 2010: 62). While certain questions posed were the same for all centres/groups such as 'What type of services/help does the centre provide? What are the constraints and challenges facing the centre/group?' the nature of the interviews allowed for the dynamics of each centre and personnel

from the same to unfold in a fluid discourse. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to get 'a feel' of both the person I was interacting with as well as of the centre/group she was from and consequently its related services. The interviews ranged from a few minutes to over an hour and emanated from appointments which were formally made to spontaneous interaction. Interaction ranged from brief cursory responses (by interviewee) to long narratives.

5.7.1   Analysis of Interviews

I had approached the interviews or interactions with the personnel from the different centres/groups as open-mindedly as I could. Mindful that *I* was soliciting information and help for *my* research purposes and thereby entering their spaces, I tried to approach the interview interactions appreciatively, as unobtrusively as possible and by allowing the interviewee to 'take the lead' in as far as providing information was concerned. Although I did interject by posing questions and comments at intervals, I allowed for the interviewees to unravel their discourses. This supports Kelly's statement that: "The relations between the meanings of particular experiences and the meanings of themes that reflect a coherent clustering or ordering of themes of experiences represent the operation of the hermeneutical circle. This process is important in all phases of interpretation in qualitative research. It begins with listening and observing" (1999: 407). Furthermore, Silverman in his analysis of qualitative interviews cites Dawson and Prus (1993: 166): "Language shapes meanings but also permits intersubjectivity and the ability of wilful persons to create and maintain meaningful words." He expands on this: "Recognising this, we cannot accept the proposition that interviews do not yield information about social worlds…Knowing full well that there are both structures and pollutants in any discussion, we choose to study what is said in that discussion" (2011: 135-136). I thus listened, observed and interpreted my interaction at the interviews. In compiling the formal data about these interviews I also adopted a 'reflexive' approach (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 283, 284).

While the interaction of some of the personnel may be described as warm, empathetic and open, I experienced the opposite reactions in other interviews. Brief agitated responses from one coordinator were directed at me at one centre, whilst at another centre I was confronted by open hostility. I was informed by the latter person that they

(staff from the centre) did not appreciate research students imposing on them (the centre) for their private (the students) purposes which usually were also linked to upward career mobility, whilst they (the centres) basically remained at the same juncture even though they give off their time. Boeije refers to such situations which can impact negatively on the obtaining of information as those with 'weak participant consent' (2010: 54). However, after I explained my frame of reference to the coordinator, her demeanour changed and she was more receptive to my presence and questions. She further offered assistance to me by stating that I may contact her should I require further information or help. This incident indicated to me how we as subjective beings construct our own meanings of things often without having full or more text or information about something and that subsequent obtaining of information alters our meanings and perceptions of the same thing or situation. Although the interviewee here 'repaired' the initial damage done in our interaction, when I reflected on that experience, I wondered about the manner in which the services were being provided to women who came there. I was cognisant that much assistance and intervention was made by that group for abused women, but the rigid requirements of appointments having to be made and set time frames for women going there, did lead me to question the manner and help given to women who went there. (I wondered whether women seeking help were also 'admonished' at times.) I subsequently became aware that the restricted, structured access to the centre/group and its services was as a result of limited resources.

Juxtaposed with that experience was the embracing and open reception I received at another centre. The coordinator there indicated her appreciation of my research and of thereby putting support groups into a more public domain. She openly shared with me not just the experiences of the centre and its challenges, but also some of her private experiences as well. For me her demeanour and sharing revealed not just her commitment and passion for what she did for other women, but also reflected the ethos of the centre/group she managed. Whilst I experienced an 'air of condescending superiority' from another member, this manager interacted with me on an equal level. I did not feel as if I was invading their space, but felt that I was given a place in their space.

Interviews with a staff member at another centre indicated a lack of full knowledge of the centre's services and procedures, and although she was empathetic to me and my work, I did not get a sense of complete organisation and structure about the services provided. However it was not as severe as the centre I referred to earlier where I was not helped, but was met with an agitated stance from the manager. Perhaps it was due to an audit to be conducted shortly by donors as she had indicated, but I did not perceive much organisation at that centre. Kelly reminds us about hermeneutics in research and states that interpreting visual representations are not subject to scientific prescripts, but rely more on 'instinct' (1999: 412). As a lecturer in Communication, I constantly remind my students about what Robbins and Wade simply refer to as 'non-verbal' communication or semiology, the communication of information through means other than spoken or written language (1999: 10). Whilst Robbins and Wade posit a very simplified construct of what Kelly refers to, my experiences as lecturer in the subject have resulted in my heightened awareness of messages from texts other than the 'what of' written or spoken language. Thus non- verbal cues such as body language and acoustic signs provide greater understanding of messages to me than merely *what* is spoken and has informed my interpretation and understanding of the interview processes.

5.8.   OVERALL ANALYSIS

The common theme which emerges from all the data collected from the different sources here is that women experience situations in their lives which warrant their seeking help and support from sources external to themselves. While some women are able to access support, others are unable to, mainly from a lack of knowledge of the availability of such groups. Those who have been able to access support have reported positive results including the possibilities for transformation and self- determination. In this regard the overall intervention made by the groups can be rated as very successful. However there are gaps on the part of the groups which impede possibilities for greater efficacy. These gaps or limitations are examined separately in this thesis. My research findings have led me to conclude also that, whilst some support groups are providing support from a position of genuine concern and desire to help women and transform their lives and empower them, some seem to operate perfunctorily and are just a source of economic income to staff working there. It is not

my intention here to pontificate on such circumstances and I am aware of the great challenges these support groups have to contend with. The varying infrastructure and resources of groups/centres seem to mirror also the attitudes and stance of some of the staff at the same. My critical noting of these factors must be seen within the context of this research and how support groups serve as agents of transformation for women and not as perpetuators of their oppression. Whilst a major factor impeding the functioning of the groups is the lack of resources, especially financial resources, the dominant factor which emerged in the findings is the lack of support from the state. The role of the government in this regard will also be examined separately.

5.9   INTERSECTIONALITIES OF RACE, GENDER, CLASS AND *'CONTEXT CONSCIOUSNESS'*

I have stated that the findings of my research indicate that the support groups identified here render good work and services to those women who seek their help. However, critical analyses of identities of race, gender and class exposes nuances prevalent in the groups and more seriously, gaps which raises questions about the services which are provided. It would seem that many groups associated with certain race identities have more women of the same race seeking support at their centres. The same seems to be the case for class and economic background. More financially empowered women seem to seek help at those centres or groups which seem more financially empowered or secure themselves. Crenshaw cites similar situations in the United States and argues that such occurrences render further financial burdens on the part of the specific centres and counsellors, which results in the dilution of the quality of services provided (1991: 1250).

While Crenshaw makes specific reference to woman of colour in the US, the underlying principle of sparse resources which mitigate against the provision of services, applies to many support centres and groups identified here/ locally. However it is the converse of the race factor which applies here- Black African lower-class women constitute the majority who experience abuse the most here and who usually receive the poorest quality of support or service, often as a result of scarce resources. (That is discussed under constraints faced by the groups.)

Sexuality is an almost invisible identity as no other groups beside the Gay and Lesbian Society, indicated that they provided services for gender-based violence and sexuality related issues, thus it would seem that the latter is the only group that provides support for specifically gender/sexuality related issues. Conversely it would seem that heterosexual women do not seek support from that group.

 The 'context consciousness' I refer to is derived from my experiences and interaction at the different centres/groups. The level of socio-political awareness by the personnel at the centres seemed to inform the interventions and approaches of the respective centres/groups. I have deduced that the assumption cannot be made that all the centres offering help to women, are necessarily operating as conscious models and practitioners of feminist ideologies and have homogenous constructs of empowerment. For some, assistance and empowerment is provided through religious or spiritual guidance, where in some instances, abused women are encouraged to reconcile with their spouses or 'work' at their relationships. At some centres, support provided is through basic information and material assistance such as shelter and food, and where possible skills training. The women receiving such services are very appreciative of those services and regard them as life-changing. At some centres, the personnel had very conscious socio-political and feminist ideologies about the services being rendered and the ensuing objectives of the centre. Thus it would seem that the different levels of consciousness at the centres, notwithstanding the work which is done impacts on the constructs of abuse, the services rendered and how empowerment is mediated in the lives of women seeking assistance. The corollary of such constructs are the women who seek assistance – what levels of assistance they seek and expect and what they perceive as meaningful assistance that they have received. This articulates with Yuval-Davis's (1991: 198) assertion of divisions in organisations: "Social divisions… involve specific power and affective relationships between actual people, acting informally and / or in their roles as agents of specific social institutions or organisations. Social divisions also exist in the ways people experience subjectively their daily lives in terms of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, specific aspirations and specific identities. Importantly, this includes not only what they think about themselves…but also their attitudes and prejudices towards others." In positing intersectionality as a framework to examine the discrimination of and experiences of women, she quotes the Centre for

Women's Global Leadership, 2001: "These methodologies will not only underline the significance of the intersection of race, ethnicity, citizenship status for marginalised women etc. but serve to highlight the full diversity of women's experiences" (ibid: 204).

While I have not undertaken this research specifically to examine how social divisions and differences in identity impact on the construct of support groups, the fundamental principles contained in intersectionality theory such as the assertions of Crenshaw and Yuval-Davis referred to above, have great relevance for support groups as the differences within them-from the very obvious physical and material to more subtle identity constructs- impacts crucially not just on how each constructs abuse of women but more importantly on how each constructs its services rendered, the women who come to them, the positioning of each in relation to the state and broader society and how each one mediates power and its relation with the state.

However an examining of intersectionality within support groups cannot be undertaken in isolation from the state itself in the South African context. Again, I place responsibility on and question the same of the state in terms of interrogating identity differences in women and providing the necessary intervention in respect of those differences. Sadly, in South Africa, where the services provided by support groups do not seem to be supported and augmented by the state and where basic aid and intervention is such a challenge, the examining of and dealing with complexities of differences such as race, gender, class etc becomes even more challenging. At the locus of theoretical academic interrogation, it is very possible but at the actual sites of unpacking and delivery (support groups) it becomes very challenging, at least at present, when support groups are fighting for their survival.

Women's issues in South Africa are conflated with other major issues as is evident in the *Ministry on Women, Children and People with disabilities.* Gender as a broad concept with its vast complexities is rendered invisible by the state's construct of women's issues, another way in which language is used to define and identify what is important and what is not and thereby a manifestation of how the state exercises power. My reference to the women's ministry here is to emphasise how detached the state is from examining complexities of intersecting identities- it seems to be dealing

inadequately with gender /women issues at present- that the concepts of intersectionality is yet to be formally thrust into the public domain by the state is another indication of how the state subverts identity politics and renders invisible a significant construct of abuse and marginalisation, thereby diluting the validity and importance of the issue and the attention it deserves. Yuval-Davis concedes that the concept of intersectionality within the global platform is relatively new and calls for more dialogue on the issue (ibid: 206).

While it seems that the state in the South African context is abdicating from its full responsibility of providing support to women, either directly or through support groups, it would seem that responsibility of interrogating intersectionality has been devolved to support groups themselves, an undertaking which contain significant implications for them (support groups).

5.10   CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SUPPORT GROUPS/CENTRES

These were factors which were provided by the different support groups and which are examined here to obtain greater understanding of circumstances which mitigate against more effective practices.

Funding

The main problem confronting the centres/ groups was that of funding and finance, which mitigated against the provisioning of more effective and further intervention. The problem of funding is crucially linked to the perception that the state was not doing enough to lend support to support groups for women. Although the groups do work and render services which fall directly within the responsibility of government, the majority of funding comes from external sources and not from the government. The lack of adequate funding translates into lack of other resources and facilities such as infrastructure; this impacts critically on the services provided by the centres/groups; it also seriously questions the role and commitment of government to gender issues in general and to support of afflicted women in particular. A significant example is that contained in an interview with the director of one group in May 2012. She stated that the group's overseas donor had indicated that it was to withdraw its

funding in the forthcoming months as it was felt that that the South African government was able to take financial responsibility for such services. One of the complexities cited was that the overseas donor would not enter directly into dialogue with the South African government or gender machinery and that the group had to undertake such communication. However, communication especially in the form of funding requests with thestate remains challenging and unproductive. Whilst this may be argued as an indication of how the state produces its power through its relations with the group (Foucault in Simons 1995: 82), the corollary argument from a gender construct is that possibilities for effecting change exist by collaborative discourse amongst the groups (Weedon 1987: 3,5,108).

Liaison with other agencies

Liaison with other government departments, as in the case with the police services, is challenging and often staff from the support groups have to accompany women personally to the relevant government departments for required assistance, including to hospitals for medical examinations and procedures especially in cases of rape. At times they (support groups) have to make various applications on behalf of their clients. These kinds of interventions by support groups are often a strain on their resources, human, as well as time.

Liaison with state machinery

Interviews with personnel (ranging from supervisors to managers/directors) of all nine groups indicate the lack of support and interest shown by government in the work done by the groups. Some of these views are expressed in the written feedback obtained from different groups:

> The State is doing very little to address women's issues. (A)

> The government needs to create more awareness about domestic violence. (C)

The State helps heterosexual members from *one political group* (my words used to replace the name of the group) only. (D)

In South Africa women's issues are not prioritised by our government. (E)

In discussing the role and intervention of the state in gender issues with a coordinator of a social awareness group in the city, she stated that 'not much is done' and that the structure of the present ministry dealing with women's issues viz. The *Ministry on Women, Children and People with Disabilities* (MWCPD) is in itself a reflection of the state's attitude, conceptualisation, approach and commitment to gender issues. Not only did such a grouping acknowledge the 'disabled' machinery of gender transformation in the country, but more importantly, it diluted the possibilities for effective transformative initiatives by relegating it to a 'shared' portfolio and status. Although support groups for women are left to provide services virtually on their own, they still have to comply with official state regulation. Such paradoxes are evident in the case of one support group not receiving any communication from a state gender department for years, despite requests for funding, and then suddenly being requested by that same machinery to submit statistics of its operations, even though that group does not receive funding from that state department.

The lack of articulation with the state and its relevant machinery is rooted in its (state) lack of cohesive functioning amongst the different levels of government. Hassim contends that the *Office on the Status of Women* (OSW) is unable to provide effective policy guidance or training. She refers to staff at provincial levels of the OSW who allege that while they receive little direction about how to deal with issues at the provincial and local level, greater emphasis seems to be placed by the state organ on international conferences (2006: 227). She further states of the state machinery: "Keeping close relationships with constituencies is difficult when funding and gender expertise are thinly spread, making it difficult to listen to how interests are articulated at the grassroots level" (ibid: 255). Hassim's assertion is confirmed by the findings of this research, through the indication by support groups that relationships with the state are virtually non-existent and that the latter does not seem to be aware of what is happening at the level of support groups. The responses from the women also support

Hassim's assertion. My observation and experiences especially during this research process, also leads me to concur with her. The various examples cited in this research of the state's inability to deal with gender issues further informs my opinion.

Cultural and Legal Constructs

Assistance provided to women in rural areas is met with its own challenges, the most common being traditional culture and practices. One such practice is that of forced marriage through the abduction of girls and women (*ukutyiwa*). Mediation by the support group becomes challenging as traditional leaders have first to be approached and convinced of the criminal acts of the men involved. Hate crime against lesbians are also difficult to negotiate in communities with deep-rooted homophobic cultures. The vesting of much authority and power by the state in traditional leaders where delineations between perceptions and practice of law and justice are blurred, renders the work of support groups complex and challenging. Ramphele cautions against the blind delegation of power to traditional level: "Another difficulty of promoting traditional leadership lies in the contradiction between the equality clauses of our constitution and the tenets of male-dominated traditional leadership. Gender equality is often violated by the practice of customary law. Failure (to align customary practices with the precepts of our constitution) puts the most vulnerable women and children at risk of having their human rights violated without access to any recourse" (2008: 97). Thus the *Traditional Courts Bill* of 2011 (Government gazette 34850) which devolves much power to traditional leaders if passed, has challenging implications for support groups for women.

5.11   LIMITATIONS/GAPS IN SERVICES OF SUPPORT GROUPS

After my inquiry into the subject and examining feedback from the different contexts and participants, I have identified factors which I believe are shortcomings or gaps in the services of the support groups. I make reference to the support groups in a homogenous context, not because those were necessarily the findings, but because it is expedient within the context of this research. The criticism of the support groups is not intended to negate the work undertaken by them, but rather to point out existing

gaps in the services provided. More importantly, it is intended to examine why these gaps exist and to inform recommendations for improvement.

Isolated modus operandi

While there are indications of some networking and collaboration among some of the groups, the dominant modus operandi seems to be that of isolated functioning. The overlapping of services confirms this theory of independent functioning, which results in depleted resources and provisioning of services or the inability to provide qualitative services in one or a few areas of need. This is not to suggest that support groups 'specialise' in different areas of service, but rather that more intense collaboration could lead to more effective service and a wider reach of target groups. It is conceded that the variables impacting on women (such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, HIV and AIDS) are complex and intertwined and as such require a multifaceted approach. It is still contended however that the services of most of the different groups can be restructured, but is an undertaking which requires review and collaboration. Given the evolution of support groups in the city since the genesis of the former, this assertion is not unrealistic and not impossible. One of the groups cited in this research reconstructed its approach in 2003 from its initial provisioning of services, in response to the changing landscape of the environment it was serving.[41] From initially providing support telephonically, it became a centre where people physically went to for help and support. The restructuring also saw the initial centre merge with another support service in the city. Thus the apparent isolated operations of groups mitigate against collaborative gender discourse for women's transformation. Tripp emphasises the significance of women's collaborative and collective action by citing the *Women's National Coalition of South Africa*, which, when formed in 1991 across the many divides, managed to craft the *Women's Charter* which serves as the basis for state reform in gender and women's issues in the country (in Cornwall 2005: 240). She asserts that collective and collaborative action enable women's organisations to thrust more private concerns and isolated initiatives into the public domain and create more effective possibilities for redress.

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[41] *The Natal Witness,* 20/01/2003

Fundraising Strategies

While it has been mentioned that financial constraints seriously impede the functioning of the groups, of significance is the seeming lack of fundraising in the public domain by most of the groups. Most of them depend on external funds for their operations, yet fundraising initiatives by them appear to be very limited or non-existent. The fundraising initiatives by one of the groups, underpinned by an apparent public relations strategy in the form of well- known patrons, support the theory that fundraising is possible and can be undertaken.[42] Coupled with this is the strategic positioning of the group in the public domain through media coverage. Conversely though, it would seem that the support or patronage of public figures is crucial to the success of the fundraising efforts.

Advocacy of Groups

Newspaper coverage is one tool used in the advocacy of these groups/ centres. Most of the groups indicate that women become aware of them through advertising, apart from by word of mouth. The feedback from the majority of respondents indicates that these advocacy strategies are limited or have limited reach as they (respondents) generally were unaware of the groups/centres. That I was not initially aware of all the groups referred to here with my having relatively easy access to information, lends support to this finding and also questions the accessibility of the 'women who do not have access or the resources' to this information and services. One of the coordinators of a support group (G) stated that generally there was a lack of information and knowledge about the different support services for women in the community:

> "There are few support services and courts, police and health workers don't know where to refer (women to) and what services are available. There is not enough funding for victim support."

The statistics indicate that it is these women who are the most vulnerable in society and who need the support services the most.

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[42] *Public Eye,* 5/10/2011; 13/6/2012

Public Discourse

Discussion and analysis of this gap is based on the feedback from and the perspectives of members of the public experiencing the services of the groups. Comment on the seemingly isolated operations of the groups was made earlier, but the focus here is on the apparent exclusive nature of services provided from a predominantly heterosexual environment. Apart from one group which provided support to the gay, lesbian, transgendered, bisexual and intersexed community (GLTBI), none of the other groups indicated that they provided such support as well. While this research is not intended to focus on support interconnected by complexity of sexual orientation and constructs, the lack of visible support for the latter raises questions about the support groups constructs of their services and especially towards that of lesbian women. Van Natta examines the construct of support services in the United States towards lesbian women who were victims of abuse. She states that support groups seem prejudiced in their construct of battered woman and also demonstrate reluctance to accept them into their centres (2005: 421). An examination into similar constructs and practices of the support groups identified here, can inform discourse on support services for the GLBTI community. Of significance to this research is that the group/centre that does provide support to GLBTI women did not overtly indicate as such in their feedback, nor did the clients who received support at the centre. These dynamics indicate how lesbian women are compelled through social constructs to keep their sexual orientation a secret as also found in Stephens's research on homophobia in Pietermaritzburg (2010). At the same time however, these dynamics indicate how women from the GLBTI community choose to construct their identities within different contexts by "departing from the norm and creating new possibilities for identities and thereby opening up discourses of resistance" (Boonzaier, de la Rey 2003: 1026).

5.12 A POSTSTRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN INTERVENTIONS OF SUPPORT GROUPS

Fundamental to the operation of the support groups as part of a broader social service is the support of the state. When viewed within the context of support services being a responsibility of the state, support and enabling action from the state for support

groups becomes imperative. Therefore in examining the efficacy of the support groups, this research is approached from the Foucauldian view that the constructs of the former is the result of not only the relations between the state and society, but fundamentally of the relations between the state and support groups themselves (Weedon 1997: 110). A 2010 discussion document of the *African National Congress Women's League* (ANCWL) charts a framework for a Gender Violence Strategy in response to the initial *National Crime Prevention Strategy* formulated in 1996 (ANC Women's League 2010). The framework indicates that a multidisciplinary approach is required in tackling the issue of gender violence. The state is identified as proffering support to victims of abuse and violence specifically in the forms of shelter, crisis intervention, legal and therapeutic assistance and the establishment of support systems. With regards to public advocacy the state is to provide information on the prevalence of gender violence as well as on the available resources and procedures that can be accessed. Both these approaches locate support groups as a central factor in the envisaged role of the state. However in this research the majority of respondents indicated that the state was not providing adequate support to support groups as is apparent in some of the responses:

> Women support group is more important to every women (sic) so that they can see the potential in them… so the government should provide enough support for these groups.

> It is important for the government to know and protect our rights.

> As a young South African I feel that if these support groups were available, we would not have such problems that are arising now and be dealing with same issues all the time, government ought to help.

The dominant theme which emerges from the findings is the lack of support and tangible evidence of the government's commitment to dealing with gender issues as part of its broader realisation of the prescripts of the constitution. The constant inability of government to address gender issues seriously through its weak implementation of policies, through its lack of visible advocacy strategies around the same and apparent inability to hold accountable those vested to drive the

transformative machineries and initiatives, has resulted in a disjointed system where official legislation is not translated into practice. This apparent failure on the part of the state to address gender inequalities adequately and specifically sustain support groups as part of that remedy seems to confirms Foucault's theory on how power is constructed and *why* it is thus: just as the survival of prisons depend on the (state's) apparent failure to prevent crime, so too it seems that the propagation of political discourse and subsequent point scoring depends on the failure of the provisioning of adequate support systems (Merquior 1985: 109); hence the lack of seriousness by the state on the issue.

 Such lack of commitment and seriousness by government is seen in its appointment of people to drive its initiatives. It is not just the lack of visible advocacy on the part of the state's gender machinery, but also the stances of senior officials which contradict the mandates and ministry they are meant to represent, defend and transform. The behaviour in recent years of the ministers of the gender portfolio has raised questions about their competency and commitment to the portfolio. In March 2010 when the present *Minister of Women Children and Persons with Disabilities* (DWCPD) was Minister of *Arts and Culture*, she walked out of an exhibition at which she was due to be the guest speaker because of the lesbian art portrayed, stating that the art was offensive and went against nation-building.[43] Her predecessor (to the DWCPD) was also not without controversy when in October 2010 she led a delegation to a gender conference in New York, but it was later noted that the majority of the staff and officials of the delegation had gone shopping and touring during the official times of the conference. It was subsequently reported that R8,3 million (almost 30%) of the ministry's budget had been spent on travelling and as there was no tangible evidence of work undertaken by the ministry, it was concluded that the rest of the money had been used up on food, drink, salaries and benefits.[44] The editorial of the same publication stated of the DWCPD: "The department seems to have been created out of political expediency rather than a real commitment to changing the lives of the marginalised, she (the minister) used the lack of budget as the reason for lack of decisive programmes of action to improve the lives of those her

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[43] *Sunday Times*, 7/3/2010
[44] *Sunday Times*, 31/10/2010

department is supposed to represent" (ibid). These words resonate with those quoted earlier by participants about the government's failure to deliver on gender issues.

The lack of public evidence of the ministry not being held accountable despite the negative publicity seems to indicate government's complacency towards certain issues, which is further conveyed by the women's ministry's limited or non-existent relationship with support groups at the local level.

Government's commitment to intervention within the gender landscape is briefly captured in *State of the Nation Addresses* over the last few years. Firstly, in 2008 then President Thabo Mbeki said: "A proposed intervention is …ensuring effectiveness of institutions supporting women and other sectors…We will make an evaluation of the gender machinery as to improve all aspects related to women empowerment."[45] Jacob Zuma's reference to government's commitment to gender issues in 2009 is located within the state's broader commitment to economic development: "Transformation will be undertaken in supporting women, youth and people with disabilities."[46] The extent of explicit commitment pronounced in 2011 to the cause of gender issues was confined to an initiative of the National Prosecuting Authority to provide friendlier and easier support to rape victims: "We will continue to prioritise crimes against women and children and to provide support through the Thuthuzela Care Centres."[47] These commitments may be viewed as rhetoric in the light of the state's failure to deliver effectively on these promised undertakings. Juxtaposed against such rhetoric are women in the form of support groups becoming agents of their own change within constructed contexts. This is referred to by Hughes as 'the choosing subject' where individuals chose their identities and behaviour often despite impeding contexts (2002: 105).

In 1998 Padayachee and Singh stated: "Whilst the government is still working out the mechanics of its Reconstruction and Development programme, thousands of women and children continue to be helpless victims of human rights violations, in their own homes" (1998:7). They cited Pillay's argument that "women in South Africa are still

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[45] Thabo Mbeki-State of the Nation address, 2008
[46] Jacob Zuma- Address to Parliament, June 2009
[47] Jacob Zuma – State of the Nation Address, 20 February 2011

disadvantaged by gender, race and class" (ibid). Ten years later Ramphele contends that "Sexism may well prove to be one of our most tenacious ghosts" (2008: 99). She was writing about the lack of progress made in the country and by the state in dealing with gender issues. She states that in order to achieve gender transformation commensurate with the country's constitution, a radical change is required at all levels of society, including national and institutional levels. She cites former president Mandela's 1994 assertion that 'freedom cannot be achieved if women have not been emancipated from all forms of oppression' and then asserts herself that "our society is struggling to live up to that commitment" (ibid: 99, 100). In 2011 she writes a similar story: "Sadly our leadership as a human rights-based democracy with a strong representation of women in the public sphere has not yet translated into change in how men and women relate to one another. Women are still largely treated as subjects of men. This disempowers women, making them vulnerable. There is a contradiction between our constitutionally protected human rights and the widespread rape and abuse of women and children."[48] In the same media edition Oppelt writes of a paradox of society. She juxtaposes the awarding of the Nobel peace prize to Liberian president Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson with the delayed justice meted out to the killers of lesbian woman ZoliswaNkonyana five years after the act in 2006. Oppelt is critical of the fact that organs of the state and machinery of the ruling party had not lent any support or voice to the cause of Nkonyana's murder but that it was NGOs that had pursued and sustained the case. In deploring the delayed judicial system in the matter and what the whole murder represented Oppelt states: "Her death makes a mockery of our constitution" (ibid).

It is my contention that the ultimate success of any state initiative is measured not by the legislation that is promulgated or the rhetoric articulated on public platforms, but by the translation of the legislation into tangible impact on the lives of ordinary people. Therefore shortcomings in terms of service delivery by support groups must be seen as shortcomings of the state.

Through a reflexive integrated analysis I have examined and shown the link between support services at local level and the state; I have shown how state practices impact

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[48] *Sunday Times*, Review, 16/10/2011

on the services and operations of support groups, more as impediments than as enablers. More crucially to the approach of this research, this analysis has shown that the dominant patriarchal constructs of the state underpin its hegemonic relations with agencies for transformation. Such relations serve to explain the pervasive culture of gender oppression in the country and pose challenges for feminist interventions.

5.13 A POSTSTRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

The approaches or methodologies employed in this research have been underpinned by a poststructuralist framework in that they have been largely informed by my subjective constructs. I have constructed *my* meanings within the discourse of this research and my findings (Veyne 2008: 96). Simultaneously, a critical feminist stance is adopted (Weedon 1987: 40, 169; Nielson 1990: 30). These have all been located within continuous reflexive perspectives (Hughes 2002: 167). The purpose of this research is not just to find out about the status of support groups, but to examine critically *why* that status is and to offer suggestions for more fundamental interventions. I therefore summarise my findings as well as emphasise and analyse the dominant theme which has emerged from the findings.

Hague et al. refer to the high incidence of domestic violence in the UK early into the millennium (2003: 2). They acknowledge both the need for support (user) groups and the latter's contribution in assisting women rebuild their lives after being violated. They are however critical of the support provided and contend that serious and genuine support should not be aimed at perpetuating dependence and a victim mentality, but rather at holistic empowerment. They describe empowerment as: "…gaining personal strength and self-esteem, and then social influence and power, typically through collective self-organisation, through identifying with one another and through offering mutual support" (ibid: 18).

In this research I have aimed to examine the efficacy of support groups in Pietermaritzburg in serving as agents of empowerment for women who solicit their

services. I have attempted to examine this by collecting information from many sources linked directly and indirectly to the support services. Information from each source has been examined and interpreted separately and then as a collective as they (sources) are interlinked and intersect with each other. This is commensurate with Kelly's analysis of interpretation of text in order to obtain a more informed understanding of situations (1999: 406 - 407).

The findings from all the sources (police statistics, questionnaires from the public as well as from support groups/centres and their clients) have all indicated a need for support groups. Notwithstanding the gaps in their provisioning, especially with advocacy, it was found that the support given to women impacted on their lives positively. This is evident in the responses from both women who had received support and the support groups themselves. However I have found disparities in the services provided at the different centres. These disparities I allude to are not confined to for example, the differing resources available at the different centres or the modus operandi of the centres, but also in their communication and interaction with external parties of which I saw myself as one.

I have also examined the articulation between the state's mandate and its implementation at local level through the services provided by the support groups. I have found the mitigating factor for the limitations in the services is the failure of the state to deliver on its mandate, as that was the recurrent pattern of feedback provided from the various sources. Inadequacies at the national level translate into failures and limited delivery at local level. As this has been the common theme throughout the findings of this research, the assertion I make, is supported by Kelly's description of thematic development : "as a kind of pattern-finding process where we identify a 'type' of occurrence by virtue of it being perceived as an underlying 'common form' found in different contexts. Thus, a theme or discourse can be said to exist …*within* and *across* situations" (1999: 412). I have shown, through the citing of various examples, that since the country's transition to democracy, intermittent attention has been accorded to women's issues and to their support on state platforms.

The various examples cited in the introduction of this thesis have shown also that whilst the state has intermittently acknowledged failures and shortcomings in this

regard, little has seemed to have changed since the transition to democracy in the context of women's empowerment at grass-roots level. These sporadic public acknowledgements by the State seems to be a construct of power through language, as articulation without subsequent action does not impact on support groups at a fundamental level (Foucault in Fillingham 1993: 12). The findings of this research also support this argument. Thus it would seem that the power wielded by the State in the public domain directly constructs support groups and their identities (Foucault in McHoul and Grace 1993: 4).

Mvimbi's examination of the efficacy of the state's *National Gender Machinery* in advancing gender equality (2009), further confirms my assertion. She concludes that the state's *Gender Machinery,* specifically, The *OSW,* has failed in its mandate (2009: 200). This articulates with the findings of this research as is indicated in some of the responses of both women and groups:

> Government is not providing enough support groups. Many support groups must be formed because there are many women out there who have needs but no one is able to meet their needs. (response of woman who had not attended a support group)

Five of the eight women who had attended support groups indicated 'NO' to the question, "Do you feel that the State is doing enough to support Support groups for women?"

78% of the 119 women who had not attended support groups indicated 'NO' to the question, "Do you feel that the State is doing enough to support Support groups for women?"

Responses from groups:

> The State is doing very little to address women's issues.

> The government needs to create more awareness about domestic violence.

> The State helps heterosexual members from *one political group* (my words used to replace the name of the group) only.

> In South Africa women's issues are not prioritised by our government.

All nine groups had also indicated 'NO' to the question, "Do you feel that the State is doing enough to support Support groups for women?"

Thus the theme of state failure has been a dominant one since the country's transition to democracy and its promise to uplift and transform the lives of women. In making reference to the findings of this research, I therefore construct a final argument here as to why I believe that the state has failed women and support groups and why, despite claims to the contrary, it does have the capacity to deliver, should it undertake a conscious and concerted effort to do so.

The construction of the support groups' identities is located within a dialectical relationship with the state. However the latter and its gender machinery are not absolved from responsibility for the challenges experienced at local level. The State together with its agencies has formulated frameworks to drive gender equality initiatives, yet it fails despite its own formulations. Even though women occupy spaces at the top levels of government, therein seems to be the root-cause of the failure. While it is be expected of these women at top levels of government to vociferously further the interests of gender equality and empowerment that does not appear to be so. A culture of arbitrary appointment of people (women) to critical positions is dominant. Qualifying criteria including crucial skills as well as genuine commitment to the cause of gender issues are lacking in many instances, with 'activist' experience (being active in the anti-apartheid struggle) being the dominant selection criterion. Hassim's observation supports this assertion: "Many appointments to the *Commission on Gender Equality* (CGE) have been based on party loyalties rather than on experience within the women's movement" (2006: 224). She expounds further on the tensions within the state: "In the administration gender equality concerns have fallen hostage to a range of institutional hierarchies and systemic obstacles that are hard to deal with from outside the bureaucracy. These create tension

for those feminists who entered the state on the assumption that it would be a site of strategic intervention. Pregs Govender resigned from her parliamentary seat in 2002 as she could not reconcile her position in parliament with its constraints and her vision for transformation" (ibid: 262). Thus the roles of many women in strategic positions are questionable in terms of the conflicting stances they adopt. Many seem to put personal interests and pursuits above genuine commitment to gender issues and as such, support the dominant male discourse even when it contradicts the gender cause.

Ramphele cites the example of a junior woman employee at Parliament who lodged a case of sexual harassment against a senior member of the ruling party in 2007 (2008: 307). The junior employee struggled to garner support for her case in Parliament even though 42% of parliamentarians were women, including the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. She finally managed to take her case forward with the support of an ordinary member of parliament. Ramphele is critical of such stances of women leaders: "Women leaders who fail to be transformative agents are undermining the cause of gender equality. Women leaders delay transformation when they fail to enlarge the circle of successful women, thus undermining the definition of leadership as male" (ibid: 310). Such reactionary stances of women indicate the internalising of identities created for them by the patriarchal environment in which they operate; that although they hold senior and influential positions, they continue to perpetuate dominant male discourse by their apparent collusion with their male counterparts. Ramphele also questions the state's ability to articulate its mandate through what she refers, as 'human and intellectual capacity' (ibid: 156). Reference is made to these cases as I believe that such situations and stances have has far-reaching implications for support groups at the local level.

Often the lack of progress on the ground and slow transformation by government is attributed to the country's 'young democracy.' The delays in the judicial system, poor delivery in the social system, lack of resources in the legal and security services which translate into the most vulnerable members of society being further marginalised and victimised, are rationalised by reference to the young democracy and that transformative initiatives takes time. Hence the lack of advocacy and support around critical issues such as support groups for women, as an integral part of gender advocacy is justified.

Yet contradictions abound, especially with regards to organisational capacity within certain time constraints. In May 2012 the country was drawn into debate and division over 'The Spear' issue[49]. An artwork which was claimed to portray Jacob Zuma (The artist did not publicly confirm or deny the assumption that the picture was of Zuma; conclusion as to the subject of the depiction was made on the basis of the title of the painting- Spear of the nation) displayed at a gallery in Johannesburg, was posted on the website of a national newspaper. Reaction to the painting being displayed on both public platforms drew reactions of consternation from members of the ruling party. This reaction from the latter catapulted the issue into the public domain within days of the painting being displayed, with public marches being staged and the issue being discussed and debated in the media. Only a week after the story broke, the ruling party was able to secure a court hearing on the matter. On the day of the hearing a public march was staged and supporting members had access to the court proceedings via live televised transmission onto a big screen outside the court. The proceedings were also broadcast live on national television.

I make reference to this case as I believe that such situations contradict the state's contention that gender transformative initiatives take time. I believe that the state does have the capacity to act constructively if it sees fit to do so. The speedy response by the state and members of the ruling party to the *The Spear* issue therefore raises questions about the state's commitment to addressing issues such as gender inequality. Hassim's criticism of the state seems to answer such questions: "The state does not simply reflect gender inequalities; its practices play a decisive role in constituting them" (2006: 240).

The general advocacy of the state on gender issues influences and shapes public constructs of gender issues. Therefore, it may be argued that the urgency around these issues and specifically around support groups is not seen as pervasive and encompassing. Discourse around this is selectively grounded within complexities such as personal interests and pursuits, financial gain and global image versus delivery at local level. However this research has shown that support groups resist state

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[49]*The City Press,* 20 May 2012

constructs and formulate their own discourses and identities, rendering them agents of transformation as cited by Meer (2010: 37) of one woman attending a support group: "I'm proud to tell other women that when you come to support group (sic) you won't only acquire skills but empower and educate women on human rights. We all need to live in dignity and enjoy the benefits of the freedom we fought for".

Support groups are thus courageously undertaking the work officially required of the state; and instead of "remaining prisoners of our history, they become agents of its making" (Ramphele 2008: 311). However, whilst the ability of women and support groups to resist oppressive situations and claim power within their isolated enclaves is admirable, it is my belief that final responsibility to provide effective support systems in the quest to deal with gender inequality and oppression of women at a fundamental level is vested in the state and its various machinery. Whilst arguments in this research have shown that the state is failing in its social responsibility, Pringle suggests that support groups can position themselves strategically in relation to the state in order to create and benefit from opportunities arising from those relationships (in Philips 1998: 204)

Another significant finding was the lack of general mainstream advocacy by support groups which resulted in many women not being aware of their existences or services. Generally, I found that the seeming lack of public concern and interest in gender issues, as evidenced in the dearth of responses received to the newspaper advertisements as well as the radio stations stances to my request to air this issue, underpins, as well as, corresponds with the lack of public knowledge. The absence of influential structures such as the media, from mainstream advocacy strategies, reinforced by situations such as the Jacob Zuma rape trial, alluded to earlier, both undermine initiatives by women's groups, as well as perpetuate gender inequalities. However, it seems that some support groups and women act as subversive agents of transformation as well as indicated in the some of the responses and reception I received at some centres, together with the assertions of women such as Govender and Ramphele, cited earlier.

hooks, a foremost proponent of Black feminism has always articulated the contradictions contained in mainstream feminism when it homogenises women and

assumes similar experiences of women, Black or White. She maintains that differences are always contained in different women's experiences. However, she contends that differences permeate the global stage, not least within gender politics (1989: 20). She argues that as much as there are differences between strong and weak, domination and dominated, powerful and powerless, women too are complicit in domination, as victims or perpetrators (ibid). In examining the domination of and exploitation of women, she challenges all of us to look at our capacity to dominate and to exploit within our personal spaces. That capacity to dominate can serve as a common point of connection and facilitator of mobilised collective action against gender oppression. She acknowledges differences amongst women, but cautions against using those differences as rigid moulds to define women: "While acknowledgement of the complex nature of woman's status is a significant corrective, it must be a starting point.... Recognition of the interconnectedness of sex, race and class highlights the diversity of experience, compelling redefinition of the terms for unity. If women do not share 'common oppression, what then can serve as a basis for our coming together?" Such an articulation has significance for support groups. I have briefly examined earlier how intersecting identities converge at the groups and the need to have these intersectionalities interrogated in order to mediate most effective interventions. However, I concur with hooks that these differences should not be used to separate women and the support groups but rather serve as a starting point for mobilising.

I have earlier on alluded to the level of consciousness within different groups. hooks contends that everyone has some understanding-whether consciously or not- of what feminism is and that understanding can serve as a 'basis for solidarity' (ibid: 23). She strongly advocates the mutual engagements of women and groups as starting points for solidarity and mobilisation, by engaging each other about their differences and in so doing can expose other differences and commonalities (ibid). The use of narrative therapy as explained in chapter two, in such contexts can facilitate meaningful engagement and interaction. hooks articulates the importance of groups and mutual engagement and how their interventions can transcend that of basic services to act as agents of contestation and transformation: "Small groups remain an important place for education for critical consciousness… for communicating feminist thinking… and individuals do not need to be equally literate or literate at all because the information

is primarily shared through conversation… The individual commitment (when small groups of people come together) provides a space for critical feedback which strengthens our efforts to change.. Working collectively to confront difference, to expand our awareness of sex, race and class as interlocking systems of domination, of the ways we reinforce and perpetuate these structures, is the context in which we learn the true meaning of solidarity. Only when we confront the realities of sex, race and class, the ways they divide us, make us different, stand us in opposition, and work to reconcile and resolve these issues will we be able to participate in the making of feminist revolution, in the transformation of the world" (ibid: 24-25). These assertions challenge support groups to rethink how they operate, and contain significant implications for their collective identities as agents of transformation.

Notwithstanding these challenges confronting support groups for women (in Pietermaritzburg), this research and its findings have attempted to show how the latter are constructs of the exercising of social power (Weedon 1997: 20) as well as how through the provision of their services, they (the support groups) are attempting to transform social relations (ibid) and also resisting the imposition of power by the State through its apparent unresponsive stance (Foucault in Simons 1995: 82).

The arguments presented in this thesis, augmented by the findings are underpinned by reflexive and interpretative approaches of poststructuralist methodology. It is intended that the findings and the narrative analysis hereof are sufficient to hold the constructs presented of all the aims undertaken, as is asserted by Kellehear (1993: 25): For poststructuralist writers, 'research' is a reading of the world and the task is always persuasion rather than proving."

CHAPTER SIX -putting the pieces together

CONCLUSION

> *I need a quiet backwater and a sense of living as though I am barely alive on the earth, treading a small, careful pathway through life.*[50]

6.1 FOREWORD

Bessie Head's words are captivating not just for the emotions evoked in those words, but more so because they resonate with this research. Conducting this research has enriched me on many levels. The journey of growth and discovery has not been confined to academic discourse but extended to my subjective self as well. Having undertaken research in this complex field and having been given windows of opportunity and privilege to see the lives of so many other women through (personal and impersonal) feedback and observation, I feel that I need to step back and quietly reflect upon that research journey undertaken, whilst at the same time experiencing trepidation at how my construction of those women's lives may be perceived. On reflecting on the support groups as well, it sometimes seems that they too are treading a 'careful pathway.' Thus in this final chapter, I summarise my research process, findings and analysis of the latter. I refer again to interpretative theory within which to locate my closing analysis. My analysis is largely constituted of interpretation of the feedback received from women and centres. I am thus guided by the interpretative theoretical framework which has permeated this qualitative research.

In this research I have used inductive reasoning (Walliman 2005: 160), inferred meaning through observation from an outside perspective ('distanciation') (Kelly 1999: 402), constructed meaning through emergent themes and patterns (ibid 411-414) and assumed many roles in order to construct meaning though what contexts and texts represented for me (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 5, 8).

Before implications for future research are provided, I discuss briefly, the various challenges I experienced during this research. Thereafter I offer a brief personal

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[50] Head 1982: 77

reflection of this research, followed by a narrative of one respondent's story. However a brief summary of the findings will be indicated.

Findings of research

This study has shown that given the violent and unequal terrain which women in general have to endure in the country and in Pietermaritzburg, support to them (women) is crucial if their empowerment is to be realised. Fundamental to that support is that which is provided at a local level by support groups. The findings presented in chapter five indicate and support these assertions. Further, all respondents in all the research methodologies employed, indicated that while there was a need for support groups, that need was not consistent with the support provided by the State to support groups.

The findings indicate the positive and beneficial impact that support groups had on those women who had solicited their services. The responses from the women correspond with the responses provided by the groups / centres themselves and indicate positive impact in wide-ranging spheres of their lives. Evidence of such impact is presented in chapter five of this thesis.

Furthermore the challenges and shortcomings confronting the support groups indicate and support the assertion that the State does not provide adequate support to the groups in order to enable them (the groups) to provide transformative interventions to women more effectively and widely. Responses from respondents as indicated in chapter five lend credence to this assertion as well.

6.2   CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED in RESEARCH

Denzin and Lincoln contend that "... qualitative research is defined by a series of tensions and contradictions ..." (2003:570).   Undertaking this research presented its own set of tensions and challenges from within my subjectivities as well as from external constructs:

"All research is presented with ethical issues" (ibid: 361). Whilst I did not encounter challenges associated with participative research methodology, I am aware that the

constructs of my methodology could have been located in a biased discourse. As indicated in the introductory chapter this research served to test (and validate) my initial hypothesis that support groups were not accorded the level of import by the state in order for them to deliver effectively on their transformative agendas. The time constraints I experienced as researcher (together with commitments of my multiple roles (Mouton 1996: 3), as well as that of support groups, mitigated against the solicitation and obtaining of broader information. Time constraints also resulted in delays in this research. Public response to questionnaires was another challenge encountered in this research. In most cases, long periods followed distribution or handing out of questionnaires to members of the public. Most of the questionnaires were not returned to me; often new copies of questionnaires were handed to the same individuals for 'snowball' distribution and were not returned to me. In many instances would-be respondents would promise the return of questionnaires, and despite many enquiries from me, did not return them. The language employed in the questionnaires may have excluded or limited participation from respondents. Contradictory responses, and also the lack of responses to certain questions in the questionnaires, support the assumption that language may have limited participation. Furthermore, responses to some questions seemed to indicate a lack of understanding in those instances. A further challenge experienced was that of responses from the different groups. Responses to my initial requests ranged from positive reception to explicit hostility. Whilst personnel from some groups expressed joy, satisfaction and relief at the research, some were openly hostile and not appreciative of my request and research itself. One director informed me that her centre would not be able to help me, whilst at another centre I was informed that they were sceptical of assisting me as I was furthering my studies possibly for a career promotion while they would not be receiving anything in return. The overall responses from centres resulted in delays in obtaining information. The lack of specific details in the information obtained from the police services as well as the support groups impeded the clearer identification of and analyses of relationships between variables such as socio-economic status and education. The limited reach of this research also posed a challenge to obtaining information. While attempts were made to reach a broad range of participants as possible, it was not possible to physically visit different areas and solicit information. Personal internal dynamics of the support groups impeded the obtaining of further information from clients of all the groups. Schedules and restructuring at some groups

resulted in long delays in responses to my request and often I had to make multiple enquiries and resubmit my request. Finally, the dynamics underpinning this research impacted on the information obtained. That this was a research undertaken for private academic purposes, meant that there was no compulsion from any party to provide information. Whilst I am appreciative of the information and responses provided, it is my opinion that responses and information given to me in many cases, were subject to what other individuals and groups perceived to be acceptable. The non-response and participation of some groups and parties such as the radio stations, also support my opinion.

Requests to radio stations

Discourse around this issue is undertaken here not just to illustrate the challenges experienced in wider participation but more importantly to confirm an initial assumption of mine about public mainstream attitude towards gender issues in general and of support groups for women in particular.

Despite numerous requests made telephonically and electronically, I was not able to have my request broadcast over radio. My request to the 'first' radio station did not yield any response. After following electronic requests with telephonic requests, I was informed that there was no one available to field my call and also that it was not known who would be able to attend to my request. Requests to the 'second' radio station yielded some responses, both electronically and telephonically. I was contacted by personnel from the station and informed that my request had been forwarded to the relevant authority to decide upon as such a request had not been received by them previously. Despite the same response being given to me many times (after my following up and also lodging my request directly with the authority in question) I have not been informed of the relevant manager's decision, neither have I received any response to my direct request to the manager in question. I was informed in an initial response that my request could be aired at the cost of radio advertisements (about R5000-00 - R10000-00), depending on the aired time. I was unable to accept that offer.

While I am not an active listener of the first radio station, my limited interaction with it and the personnel (regarding my request) resulted in an impression of disorganisation at the station. That prevented further interaction with the said station which in turn impeded my being able to formulate a more informed attitude and opinion towards it, especially of its attitude towards the subject of my research. Whether the blasé and disorganised image was a strategy, is subject to opinion.

My interaction with the 'second' radio station has provided me with opportunity to make more informed assumptions about it. Listening in to it on a weekly basis enables me to have (some) overview of its aired contents and thereby to hypothesise about its assumed ethos and stance towards the subject of my research. I believe that the radio station adopts a very 'safe, middle-ground' stance as a public medium, it does not offer or encourage any challenging or critical dialogue on issues, but merely reports on the latter. I believe that it attempts at times to project a more critical stance and serve the functions of moral watchdog and purveyor of social justice, but these, which are undertaken in isolated contexts, are aligned to broader national events. To me these acts appear to be marketing strategies and public relations initiatives, rather than acts driven by an ethos of developed social awareness and commitment. An example of this was the radio's stance during the UN's *Conference on Climate Change* held during the latter part of 2011 at the International Convention Centre in Durban. For the duration of the conference (28 November – 9 December 2011) the station seemed to adopt a progressive stance on climate change and environmental issues, but after the conference, that stance does not seem to have been sustained. I believe that the stance adopted by the station at the time was done so out of a 'need to be seen to be politically correct.' In my opinion, genuine commitment towards issues would see sustained initiatives, rather than flitting actions which only coincide with broader national events. I believe therefore that the radio station does not perceive gender and women's issues as important, hence its disregard for my request. It further reflects a lack of social commitment to broader socio-political and economic issues, specifically in relation to gender issues. My opinion is supported by Ramphele's assertion that: "The media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion that impacts on social relationships over time" (2008:101). She cites a study by the *South African National Editors Forum* (SANEF) which 'revealed that the South African media have not yet transformed themselves to promote gender equality as entrenched in the constitution'

(ibid). I am of the opinion therefore that the particular radio station with its claim of a large listenership in the province of KwaZulu Natal, validates SANEF's findings.

6.3   IMPLICATIONS for FUTURE RESEARCH

In concluding this thesis, implications for future research are presented. This research serves as a starting point for more rigorous research underpinned by official state mandate, to be undertaken of support groups to measure the state's progress, identify gaps, inform future practice and to document records for future research. An undertaking of this kind will not differ in principle, from that which was undertaken by the *National Women's Coalition* in formulating the *Women's Charter* in 1994.

The lack of an overall integrated and collaborative support system mitigates against comprehensive records being kept to monitor efficacy of the same. Thus the instituting of such a system can facilitate research containing clear details of users at the various places that will in turn enable the tracking of users through the intervention process from the moment they solicit help till the time they 'exit' the intervention process. The benefits of this are similar to that indicated above.

Participative research can also help identify clearer dynamics of and extent to which interventions are made in the lives of women. Language, discourse and power relations may be analysed in more effective contexts in such research. Hague et al. point out salient factors of intervention methodology of support centres: "Theories of 'learned helplessness' and terminology that stresses a 'victim's status mean that abused women continue to be viewed as dependent, just as they were probably treated during the abuse" (2003: 16). They stress that language is crucial in that empowerment and self-confidence building process (ibid). Thus a more inclusive experience into the dynamics of support groups could facilitate such findings.

Ethnographic participative research (Gobo, in Silverman 2011: 17) at each centre has implications for measuring efficacy of each centre through the obtaining of clearer data and tracking of participants. Such participative research can also help measure methodologies employed at support centres and determine whether principles and practice of Narrative therapy are employed as transformative tools. The response of

one woman who received help at a support group seems to indicate the need for such practices:

> Whenever you have a problem, you feel a relief, once you learn that you "as an individual" (sic) you are not the only one affected by that kond (sic) of a problem. The support groups should be formed to assist everybody, depending on the type of a problem.

Implications also exist for research into the construction of identities and experience of women who have used support services. The convergence of different identities amongst women which impact on how they (women) construct abuse and violence can be further researched in juxtaposition with the different contextual identities of women, individually. Further the users of support groups/centres may be afforded opportunities to impact on social discourse. Hague et al.describe a similar project undertaken in the UK in the early 2000s in which experiences of domestic abuse were obtained from all relevant parties including abused women, agencies and domestic violence forums. Apart from being asked about the services they received from the respective service centres/groups, women were also asked for their opinions and input on domestic violence policy and practice (2003: 3).

Whilst formal research and documentation of experiences at local support groups remains sparse and withheld from the public domain, valuable lessons can be learnt from Hague et al.'s documentation of experiences of support groups in the UK. Although during my research I experienced honest, transformative initiatives, I did experience too, that which seemed perfunctory, as if those providing support at the centres were 'going through routine motions.' I did experience too discourse which seemed condescending and imposed from a seemingly 'superior' position. This lead me to wonder about the power relations in operation when women sought help at the respective centres and the impact that such relations had on the actual users and implications for their transformation. Thus the advocacy by Hague et al. of sincere interactions and relations between users and groups is one which local support groups can embrace: "The establishment of dialogue between users and providers creates forums in which experiential and professional knowledge can be shared and thus offers at least the possibility of transformation and change" (ibid: 21).

A group of users of support groups in the UK compiled a list of general improvements they would like to see within the support system. The list ranged from simple advocacy strategies, to the kind of services they would like to experience at support centres ((ibid: 158- 159). On scrutinising this list, it occurs to me that this is no different to what users of support centres and groups here seek. Thus local support groups/centres have a responsibility to consider what users may be actually seeking when they go to the centres. This further resonates with Hague et al.'s reminder that support groups are situated at a crucial juncture to women's lives and can only offer effective help if they are attuned to women's needs. They caution: "If we fail to listen, we may fail to be of help" (ibid: 3).

6.4 FINAL REFLECTIONS

I have come a long way since *I* first sought help from a support group. I believe that this research is a reflection of my own development and transformation, of my own realisation of power. Being able to depict the experiences of women (through that of support groups) and bring that into the public domain is an empowering experience and an act of power. It is therein that I am able to also appreciate what Foucault meant by his assertion that power is everywhere and comes from below (Mchoul and Grace 1993: 39). It is my fervent expectation that the support system for women in Pietermaritzburg does not fade into 'quiet backwaters' of existence but takes its resistance into more dominant discourse in its quest to challenge gender inequalities and transform lives of women. The words of one respondent are therefore encouraging:

> Anything is possible, as a women (sic) let us stand/raise up and shine.

In positing my findings and what I perceive as salient implications for this field of research, I am mindful that my interpretations are subject to the interpretations of others; this was the paradox referred to early on in my introduction. However, my experiences and interpretations are presented together with possibilities for determining and constructing a way forward. I contend that this is my construct of the truth and in submitting to its subjectivity, am not imposing it on anybody or context. This is in keeping with Foucault's claim: "Human beings can never accede to the

whole truth, for it exists nowhere" in (Veyne 2008: 57). However it is my contention, based on the findings of this research that support groups in general are not looking for " a quiet backwater and treading a small, careful pathway through life" but are active in transformative discourse for those women they engage with.

6.5   <u>AFTERWORD-</u> Looking for hope in a place – "BARBARA'S" STORY[51]

Undertaking this research and beginning the formal academic construction of my work resulted in dilemmas for me. I would be falsifying if I claimed that I did not suffer from the 'grand save the world' syndrome, that condition or contextual approach which I believe many a student tends to adopt, whereby she or he seems to be informed by an altruistic mission to impact greatly on her/his world through her/his research and a compelling belief in that mission. She or he is then regularly brought down to earth from the lofty heights of almost naïve ideals to the 'real world' through the various interventions and experiences of the academic process. Then she/he realises that her/his work in a context such as this serves the primary pursuit of academic achievement and that the possibility of actual achievement and impact in that area of research is relegated to remote chance, a by-product of this discourse which may be seen as miraculous even. A dilemma which confronted me was that the research, although an academic exercise, resulted in confrontation with real people with real- life experiences and a sense of expectancy from their participation in this research.

The dichotomy between interaction with the many women for research purposes and the reality of their lives into which they afforded me insight, compelled me to a discourse beyond that of academic prescripts. If Foucault stated that, irrespective of the situation every person has power and thus the potential to effect change (Simons 1995: 82), I am then compelled to reflect on the change that I can effect and the starting point for me is to tell the stories of those women who have shared them with me and who are affected by this research. In a way the feedback provided through the questionnaires contain parts of stories of those lives. However, I believe that a more detailed narrative of one woman's story which resonates with that of so many other

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[51] Interview with a respondent to newspaper advertisement, Oct 2010, she asked me to use her actual first name.

women, does greater justice and bringing it into the public domain is a catalyst for change and an act of empowerment:

Barbara ended her first marriage after ten years of financial, emotional and physical abuse. After enduring a financially abusive second relationship in which she was manipulated and felt psychologically abused, she decided to seek help from a governmental welfare department. Help from that organ was not provided and the documents of her case were even 'lost.' She turned to the police services for help. The latter seemed to 'choose' not to become involved in and deal with her case of abuse:

> Both the welfare and the police did not help me. They said they could not help me, that I was at fault. They manipulated the situation to look like I was lying.

The case against her seemed to be reinforced by her husband 'phoning her work and levying accusations at her. She eventually lost her job. Her husband even managed to convince her mother that she was fabricating the whole story which resulted in the breakdown of the relationship between her and her mother. Her husband's 'smooth talk' and polite displays in public reinforced the belief of many that she was lying about her abuse. Barbara asks:

> How do you get people to believe you when the abuser is so convincing in public, so affectionate?

Barbara's two children from her first marriage then aged eight and ten respectively were removed from her custody. Bereft of any family Barbara sought help from various places. Some religious based organisations offered help on 'conditions' which included compliance with the religious-based practices subscribed to at the places. Religious ministers often did not help her as they seemed to believe that her situation was due to her fault. Not only did they indicate that she was not behaving in a 'religious' way but they did not seem familiar with the concept and practice of gender abuse. Barbara believes that some places of support provided help 'for show,' that while to the outside world it seemed they were providing a great service, within the places themselves, the support provided was not intended to make any real difference

to the lives of women who came there and was more for the benefit of the donors who conducted monitoring of the places. Barbara experienced abuse in some of the very places that purported to provide refuge to abused women. She sums up her experience of one place:

> I went to a centre called 'Place of Hope' and found despair.

After moving around many places she found help in one support group which assisted with her divorce from her second husband and provided counselling to help her healing and reclaiming of her identity.

When I interviewed Barbara, she had been working for a few years, had been living in her own rented outbuilding and was about to marry for the third time. Her husband to be was working at the same place as her. She shared with me that what endeared her to her new prospective husband was his humility and shared interests with her. She said that he did not relate or interact with her from a position of superiority but as an equal to her and appreciated her for who she was. All ties and contact with members of her previous family, including her children, remained severed. At the time of my interview with her she was very optimistic and happy. She implored me to tell her story.

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ANNEXURES

Research Instruments and Methodologies

1. Letters

1.1 Letter of Permission from *South African Police Services* for research

SAP 21

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS   **SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE**

Posbus/Post Office Box 1965

Verwysing Reference	3/1/1
Navrae Enquiries	**MAJ GEN MC NGCOBO**
Telefoon Telephone	**031 325 4812**
Faksnommer Fax number	**031 325 4802**

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER
CRIME DETECTION
KWAZULU-NATAL
DURBAN
4000

2011-06-23

The Cluster Commander
PIETERMARITZBURG
KWAZULU-NATAL

PERMISSION TO OBTAIN POLICE STATISTICS OR RESEARCH / STUDIES: MS CYNTHIA STEPHENS

1.   The abovementioned person is hereby granted permission to obtain police statistic for research/ study purposes.

2.   This office has explained that confidentiality is of the utmost importance and the consequences that would follow in the event of information being leaked out.

3.   Find attached herewith application as received by this office from Ms. Stephens.

_____   **MAJOR GENERAL**
DEPUTY PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER: CRIME DETECTION: KWAZULU-NATAL
MC NGCOBO

1.2 Letters of Consent from Support groups

Gift of the Givers
FOUNDATION

04 October 2011

CYNTHIA STEPHENS
STUDENT NUMBER: 872879318
University of KwaZulu Natal

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

AGREEMENT FOR CYNTHIA STEPHENS TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH FOR
MASTERS DEGREE IN GENDER STUDIES:
RESEARCH ON SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG

This serves to confirm that the Gift of the Givers Careline Counselling has agreed for Cynthia Stephens 872879318 to carry out the above-mentioned research. It is agreed that the student will collect information through interviews and/or questionnaires by way of interviewing a senior person of the organisation (director/coordinator/supervisor) and where possible, users of the organisation's services. We understand the ethical stipulations.

For further queries feel free to contact us at the below mentioned details.

Kind regards

Zohra Sooliman
Director : Counselling Service

"Best Among People are those who Benefit Mankind"

Tel: 0800 786 777, **+27** (0)33 345 0163
Fax: +27 (0)33 394 3780, +27 (0)33 342 7489
Email: info@giftofthegivers.org, **Web**: www.giftofthegivers.org

NPO: 032-031
PBO: 930018993

FAMSA · PIETERMARITZBURG

Families South Africa: Pietermaritzburg

Registration Number. 002-309 NPO

2nd Floor
Gallwey House
Gallwey Lane
Pietermaritzburg 3201

Tel: (033) 342 4945
Fax: (033) 345 3472
P O Box 928
Pietermaritzburg 3200

e-mail: famsapmb@sai.co.za

25 August 2011

To Whom It May Concern
University Of KwaZulu Natal

Participation In Research For Masters Degree In Gender Studies: Research On Support Groups For Women In Pietermaritzburg

Student: Cynthia Stephens (Student Number: 872879318, University Of KwaZulu Natal)

This letter serves to confirm that FAMSA Pietermaritzburg has agreed to participate in the above-mentioned research through the provision of information via interviews with, and/or questionnaires completed by the Coordinator of Support Groups; and where possible and deemed appropriate by this organisation, by the users of the organisation's services.

The details of the research are understood to be as per the letter of request dated 08/10/2010 from her Senior Lecturer/Supervisor, as well as one from the researcher dated 20/01/2011.

For further information please contact the Executive Director on 033 342 4945

Thank You

Yours faithfully

Mrs R Jamal
Executive Director

FAMSA BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS ● UFAMSA WAKHA UBUDLEWANE

LifeLine

Building Community Heart

LifeLine Pietermaritzburg DM

Incorporating Rape Crisis
14 Princess Street
P.O. Box 2075
Pietermaritzburg
3200
Tel: 033 342 4447
Fax: 033 3453946

Site Office 1 : Amajuba

1 st Floor
ABSA Building
2 Whyte Street
Newcastle
2940
Tel: 034 312 8080

www.lifeonline.co.za

20 February 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN GENDER STUDIES: RESEARCH ON SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG

STUDENT: CYNTHIA STEPHENS (STUDENT NUMBER: 872879318, University of KwaZulu Natal)

This serves to confirm that **LifeLine and Rape Crisis** has agreed to participate in the above-mentioned research through the provision of information via interviews and/or questionnaires by a senior person of the organisation (director/coordinator/supervisor) and where possible, users of the organisation's services.

The details of the research are understood to be as per letters provided by the researcher and her supervisor.

For further information the director may be contacted at 033 342 4447

Yours sincerely

Sinikiwe Biyela

DIRECTOR

NGO 002-128   Incorporating   rape crisis
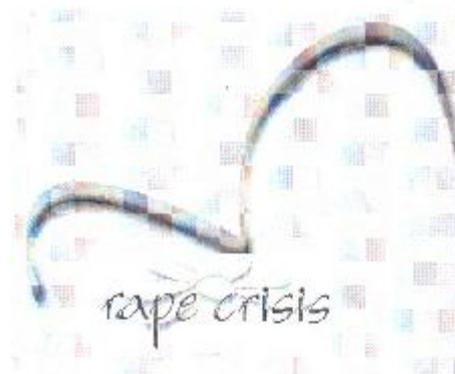
The Haven
An Emergency Shelter for Women and their Children

P.O. Box 11046
Dorpspruit
3206

25 May 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN GENDER STUDIES: RESEARCH ON SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG

STUDENT: CYNTHIA STEPHENS (STUDENT NUMBER: 872879318, University of KwaZulu Natal)

This serves to confirm that **'The Haven'** has agreed to participate in the above-mentioned research through the provision of information via interviews and/or questionnaires by a senior person of the organisation (director/coordinator/supervisor) and where possible, users of the organisation's services.

The participation is undertaken on the understanding of the following principles:

1. Participation is voluntary.
2. Information to be provided will be done with the full consent of the relevant respondents
3. All information provided will be treated with respect and confidentiality.
4. Information from users will be obtained on the basis of their anonymity.
5. No direct references will be made in the thesis to organisations and persons through use of names and details of identities (Where direct reference is made to respondents (centres or individuals) regarding information obtained pseudonyms will be made use of in order to protect the identities of the former. The centres will only be cited in the general chronology of support groups identified.
6. The information obtained will be for academic purposes only, unless requested otherwise by either parties (eg. for publication) and is regulated by the ethical guidelines of the university (UKZN).

GOODNESS NXUMALO (Ms)
MANAGER- THE HAVEN

GAY & LESBIAN NETWORK

equality	tolerance	respect	acceptance
ukulingana	ukubekezela	inhlonipho	ukwamukeleka

NPO NO: 026-854
PBO NO: 930006636

30 September 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN GENDER STUDIES: RESEARCH ON SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG

STUDENT: CYNTHIA STEPHENS (STUDENT NUMBER: 872879318, University of KwaZulu-Natal)

This serves to confirm that the Gay and Lesbian Network in Pietermaritzburg has agreed to participate in the above-mentioned research through the provision of information via interviews and/or questionnaires by a senior person of the organisation (director/coordinator/supervisor) and where possible, users of the organisation's / group's services.

The participation is undertaken on the understanding of the following principles:

1. Participation is voluntary.
2. Information to be provided will be done with the full consent of the relevant respondents
3. All information provided will be treated with respect and confidentiality.
4. Information from users will be obtained on the basis of their anonymity.
5. No direct references will be made in the thesis to organisations and persons through use of names and details of identities. Where direct reference is made to respondents (centres or individuals) regarding information obtained pseudonyms will be made use of in order to protect the identities of the former. The centres will only be cited in the general chronology of support groups identified.
6. The information obtained will be for academic purposes only, unless requested otherwise by either parties (e.g. for publication) and is regulated by the ethical guidelines of the university (UKZN).

Regards

LONDEKA XULU
OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Aorina

Esther House

One Woman Served is One Woman Saved

Direct Line: +27 33 345 5843 • Fax: +27 33 345 2818 • E-mail: ijesterhouse@futurenet.co.za

Association Incorporated Under Sec21 • NPO No. 115 - 284

December 20 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

<u>PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN GENDER STUDIES:
RESEARCH ON SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG.</u>

<u>STUDENT: CYNTHIA STEPHENS (STUDENT NUMBER: 872879318, University of
Kwazulu Natal)</u>

This serves to confirm that ESTHER HOUSE has agreed to participate in the
above mentioned research through the provision of information via interviews and/
questionaires by a senior member of the organization(director/ co-
ordinator/supervisor) and where possible, users of the organisation's services.

The participation is undertaken on he understanding of the following principles:

1. Participation is voluntary
2. Information to be provided will be done with the full consent of the relevant
   respondents.
3. All information provided will be treated with respect and confidentiality.
4. Information from the users will be will be obtained on the basis of their
   anonymity.
5. No diect references will be made in the thesis to organizations and persons
   through use of names and details of identities (Where direct reference is
   made to respondents, centres or individuals) regarding information obtained.
   Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect the identities of the former.
   The centres will only be cited in the general chronology of support groups
   identified.
6. The information obtained will be for academic purposes only, unless requested
   otherwise by either parties (eg for publication) and is regulated by the
   ethical guidelines of the university (UKZN)

DIRECTOR

J·A·W
JUSTICE
& WOMEN
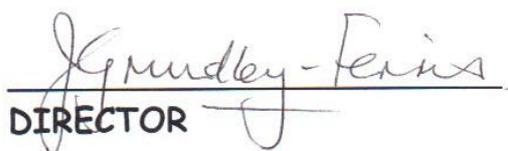
Working towards justice, freedom, dignity,
equality and development – for and with women.

4 October 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Participation in research for Masters Degree in Gender Studies: Research on support groups for women in Pietermaritzburg
Student: Cynthia Stephens Student number 872879318 University of Kwa Zulu Natal

This serves to confirm that Justice and Women agreed to participate in the above mentioned research through the provision of information via interview and completion of a questionnaire by Amber Howard Cornelius the deputy Manager of Jaw on the 4 October 2012.

The details of the research are understood to be in accordance with the letters provided by the researcher and her supervisor to JAW.

Should you require any further information please contact the Manager Jenny Bell at 033-3949949.

Yours faithfully

JBell

Jenny Bell
Manager

Winning Women South Africa
Pmb After 5

Under the auspices of Hayfields Baptist Church

20th June 2012

To Whom It May Concern
University Of KwaZulu Natal

Participation in Research For Masters Degree in Gender Studies : Research on support Groups for Women in Pietermaritzburg

**Student: Cynthia Stephens   -Student Number: 872879318,
University Of KwaZulu Natal**

This letter serves to confirm that Winning Women SA, Pmb After 5 has agreed to participate in the above-mentioned research through providing information via interviews with, and/or questionnaires completed by the Executive Chairman; and where possible and deemed appropriate by their organization, by the users of the organisation's services.

The details of the research are understood to be as per the letter of request dated 08/10/20 from her Senior Lecturer/Supervisor, as well as one from the researcher dated 20/01/2011.

Should you require any further information please contact the Executive Chairman on 033-3422034

Thank You

Yours faithfully

E. R. Howard-Browne

Mrs E.R. Howard-Browne
Executive Chairman for Winning Women SA
153 Roberts Road, Clarendon
Pietermaritzburg   3201

MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN CRISIS CENTRE

Tel: 033 8189253

9 Shelley Crescent
Mountain Rise
PIETERMARITZBURG

3200

24 June 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN GENDER STUDIES: RESEARCH ON SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG

STUDENT: CYNTHIA STEPHENS (STUDENT NUMBER: 872879318, University of KwaZulu Natal)

This serves to confirm that **'MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN CRISIS CENTRE'** has agreed to participate in the above-mentioned research through the provision of information via interviews and/or questionnaires by a senior person of the organisation (director) and where possible, users of the organisation's services.

The details of the research are understood to be as per letters provided by the researcher and her supervisor.

For further information the director may be contacted at 033 8189253.

Yours sincerely
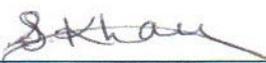
SUMAYA CHETTY (Ms)

DIRECTOR/MANAGER

1.3   **Advertisement placed in local newspapers**

Have you attended,
been involved in or
know of

**SUPPORT
GROUPS FOR
WOMEN IN
PMB?**

Your information is
required for research

**Please contact
Cynthia Stephens on
079 501 9022**

You may SMS and I will
call you.

All information will be
treated with confidence.

2. Questionnaires

2.1.   Questionnaire distributed to public

GENDER STUDIES QUESTIONNAIRE

> AIM: TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE OF
> SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG

Please fill in this questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible.
Where applicable, indicate with an 'X' your choice of response; otherwise provide a brief answer where required.
ALL INFORMATION WILL BE RESPECTED AND TREATED WITH CONFIDENCE.
YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO PROVIDE YOUR NAME.
_____

A. PERSONAL DETAILS:

1. AGE GROUP
19 and below ☐
20 – 29   ☐
30 – 39   ☐
40 – 49   ☐
50 – 59   ☐
60 – 69   ☐
70 and over ☐

2. RACE GROUP: INDIAN   ☐
                  WHITE   ☐
                  AFRICAN   ☐
                  COLOURED   ☐
                  OTHER   ☐

                  _____

3.   RELIGION:
NONE   ☐
TRADITIONAL   ☐
CHRISTIANITY   ☐
ISLAM   ☐
HINDUISM   ☐
OTHER   ☐

4.   MARITAL STATUS:
MARRIED   ☐
SINGLE   ☐
DIVORCED   ☐
WIDOWED   ☐
COMMON LAW PARTNER   ☐

5.   ARE YOU A PARENT?
     YES   ☐
     NO   ☐

   If 'YES' state number of children _____
     Age/s _____

6.   ARE YOU EMPLOYED?
                      YES   ☐
                      NO   ☐

   If 'YES' state occupation

     _____

7.   EDUCATION: PRIMARY SCHOOL   ☐
       HIGH / SECONDARY SCHOOL   ☐
       DEGREE/S   ☐
       DIPLOMA/S   ☐
       SKILL or COURSE CERTIFICATES   ☐
       NO FORMAL EDUCATION   ☐

B. EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT GROUP/S:

8.   **Have you attended or obtained help from a support group for women?**
        YES ☐   **NO** ☐

If you answer 'NO' go to section C of this questionnaire

9.   **If 'YES' state the reason for getting help-**
        Domestic abuse ☐
        Legal assistance ☐
        General counselling ☐
        Financial assistance ☐
General information ☐
        Social support ☐
Counselling for rape/abortion/
        Trauma ☐
        Medical assistance/info ☐
        Other ☐

10. **For how long did you get help?**
        One day or less ☐
        More than one day ☐
        One week ☐
        More than one week ☐
        One month ☐
        More than one month ☐

11. **How did you get to know of the support group?**
Read about it ☐
Was told about ☐
Was referred to it by police ☐
Was referred to it by family/friends ☐
 Other ways _____

12. **Did you find the support useful?**   **YES** ☐   **NO** ☐

13. **If 'YES' how did the support change or affect you/your life?**

     Developed your confidence/self esteem
     Was able to take legal action ☐
     Was able to be more independent ☐
     was able to make decisions for
     Yourself /your family ☐
     Was able to find employment
     or become financially
     independent ☐
     Other ways ☐

14. **Where did you find/obtain the support / help?**

_____

15. **Did you pay for the help/services?**

     YES ☐   **NO** ☐

16. **If 'YES' how much? _____**

C. GENERAL OPINION on SUPPORT GROUPS:

17.   Have you ever wanted / needed to attend a support group?   YES   ☐ NO ☐

18.   Do you know of any support group?   YES   ☐ NO ☐

19.   If 'YES' please state the name of the group
         _____

20.   Do you feel that there is a need for support groups for women?   YES   ☐ NO   ☐

21. Do you feel that more information / advertising should be done
about support groups for women?   YES   ☐ NO   ☐

22. Do you feel that the state / government provides enough support
for and to these groups?   YES   ☐ NO   ☐

23. Would you attend a support group if you knew of one?   YES   ☐ NO   ☐

24. Would you recommend anyone to a support group if you knew of one?   YES   ☐ NO   ☐

25. General comments or suggestions:

_____
_____

Thank you for your valued time and assistance.
Compiled by Cynthia Stephens- Student in Gender Studies, UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus.

2.2.   **Questionnaire for Support Groups/Centre**

GENDER STUDIES QUESTIONNAIRE

AIM: TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARITZBURG

Please answer the questions as completely as possible. Mark the answer of your choice with an ''X'' where applicable or please provide details where required.
Please note that the information solicited is for research purposes only and will be treated with confidence . No group will be identified individually by name in the analysis of the information.
_____

NAME OF GROUP: _____

1. SERVICES PROVIDED:

COUNSELLING	☐
LEGAL ADVICE	☐
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	☐
GENERAL INFORMATION	☐
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE/ INFO	☐
EMPLOYMENT ADVICE/ ASSISTANCE	☐
OTHER	☐

_____

2.If Counselling is provided, state what counselling is for eg. Domestic abuse, Rape, etc. (List each on a separate line.)

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

3. Does the group/ centre have trained personnel for the services listed above?

   YES   ☐   NO   ☐

4. If yes how many trained staff does the group/ centre have? _____

5.What is the average number of women per month who come to the group/ centre for help/ assistance? _____

6. Profile of women seeking assistance. Please provide details of the most common profile according to the factors provided eg. Under 'Race' you can state 'all race groups' if that is the case.

Race _____

Employment Status _____

Marital Status _____

Parental Status _____

Age Group _____

Educational Level _____

Religion _____

Other details _____

7. **What is the average duration of the service/s provided eg.one week, etc?**

_____

8. **How do the women become aware of the group/ centre?**
   (advertisements, referred by police, etc.)

_____
_____

_____

9. **How is the group/ centre funded to enable it to function?**

_____

_____

_____

10. **Briefly describe the success rate/ effectiveness of the service/s provided by the group/ centre.**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. **Describe the change/s to the women's lives after obtaining help from the group/ centre.**

_____
_____
_____
_____

12. **Describe the problems which the group/ centre experiences.**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

13. Do you feel that there is a need for more support groups for women to be established?

    YES   ☐   **NO**   ☐

14. Do you feel that the state is 'doing enough' in addressing or supporting gender/ women's issues through it's support of support groups?

    YES   ☐   **NO**   ☐

General Comments or suggestions:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your valued time and input.
Compiled by Cynthia Stephens – Student in Gender Studies –UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus

2.3.   Questionnaire for Clients of Support Groups/Centres

<div align="center">

GENDER STUDIES QUESTIONNAIRE

</div>

**AIM: TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERVICES
PROVIDED BY SUPPORT GROUPS FOR WOMEN IN PIETERMARTIZBURG**

This questionnaire is for women attending / who have attended the / a support group.

Please answer the questions as completely as possible. Put a cross 'X' in the block next to your answer, where applicable or provide details where required.
Please note that the information is for research purposes only and will be treated with confidence. No group or individual will be identified by name. You are NOT required to give your name.

_____

1. AGE GROUP   **2. MARITAL STATUS**

Below 20   ☐   **Single**   ☐

20 – 30   ☐   **Married**   ☐

31 – 40   ☐   **Divorced**   ☐

41 – 50   ☐   **Widowed**   ☐

ABOVE 50   ☐   **Cohabitating/
                                                         Living with a
                                                         Partner**   ☐

If married or living with a partner, state for how long _____

3. FORMAL EDUCATION   **4. RACE GROUP**

State highest level of education _____   **African**   ☐

Other eg. Computer course _____   **Coloured**   ☐

                                                             Indian   ☐
                                                             White   ☐

                                                             Other_____

5. ARE YOU EMPLOYED   YES ☐   NO ☐   **6. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION**

If YES state occupation   _____   **NONE**   ☐

                                                             CHRISTIAN   ☐

                                                             HINDU   ☐

                                                             MUSLIM   ☐

                                                             OTHER _____

7. What control do you have over your income / money?
Total control ☐
Some control ☐
No control ☐

8. HOW LONG HAVE YOU ATTENDED THIS SUPORT GROUP?
_____

9. WHY DID YOU JOIN THIS SUPPORT GROUP? (eg. experienced domestic abuse, suffered from depression, was lonely)
_____

10. WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BENEFIT OR GET FROM ATTENDING THIS GROUP?
_____

11. DID YOU FIND THAT YOU BENEFITTED / ARE BENEFITTING IN THESE WAYS?
YES ☐   NO ☐

Briefly explain why or why not _____

_____

12. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THIS GROUP? MEDIA eg newspapers ☐
FRIENDS ☐
RELATIVES ☐
MEMBER/S OF GROUP ☐
SOCIAL WORKER/S ☐
SAPS (POLICE) ☐
OTHER (please state)_____

13. HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS IN ATTENDING THE GROUP eg.transport,

   financial   YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please state the problem/s
_____

14. DO OTHER PEOPLE (eg, your spouse) KNOW THAT YOU ARE ATTENDING / ATTENDED THIS GROUP?
                    YES ☐   NO ☐

15. DO or DID THEY SUPPORT YOUR ATTENDING THE GROUP?
                    YES ☐   NO ☐

16. DO YOU KNOW OF OTHER SUPPORT GROUPS THAT YOU COULD ATTEND?
                    YES ☐   NO ☐

17. APART FROM THIS SUPPORT GROUP WHAT HELPS YOU COPE?

_____

_____

18. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE FACILITATOR/S or SUPERVISOR/S OF THE GROUP?

VERY CARING	☐	CARING	☐	UNCARING	☐
VERY HELPFUL	☐	HELPFUL	☐	UNHELPFUL	☐
VERY SUPPORTIVE	☐	SUPPORTIVE	☐	UNSUPPORTIVE	☐
VERY FRIENDLY	☐	FRIENDLY	☐	UNFRIENDLY	☐
VERY TRUSTWORTHY	☐	TRUSTWORTHY	☐	UNTRUSTWORTHY	☐

OTHER

_____

19. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP?

VERY CARING	☐	CARING	☐	UNCARING	☐
VERY HELPFUL	☐	HELPFUL	☐	UNHELPFUL	☐
VERY SUPPORTIVE	☐	SUPPORTIVE	☐	UNSUPPORTIVE	☐
VERY FRIENDLY	☐	FRIENDLY	☐	UNFRIENDLY	☐
VERY TRUSTWORTHY	☐	TRUSTWORTHY	☐	UNTRUSTWORTHY	☐

OTHER

_____

20. HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST ATTENDED THE GROUP? (eg. scared, unsure, positive)

_____

21. HOW DID YOU FEEL AFTER ATTENDING THE GROUP / AFTER ATTENDING FOR A WHILE?

_____

22. DID or DO YOU FEEL THAT THE WHOLE COURSE OF THE GROUP WAS SUFFICIENT?

YES ☐   NO ☐

If no, please explain

_____

_____

23. DO YOU THINK THAT THE SUPPORT YOU RECEIVED WAS

VERY HELPFUL ☐   HELPFUL ☐   UNHELPFUL ☐

Please state why

_____

_____

_____

24. DO YOU FEEL THAT THIS SUPPORT GROUP COULD BE IMPROVED UPON OR CHANGED?

YES ☐   **NO** ☐

If yes, please state

_____

_____

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THIS SUPPORT GROUP / SUPPORT GROUPS

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your assistance.
Compiled by Cynthia Stephens, student in Gender Studies- UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus