

**Women leadership in governance networks. A case study  
of Site-B in Khayelitsha.**

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A mini thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
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## KEY WORDS

Khayelitsha

Women

Gender

Equality

Leadership

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Governance

Empowerment



## **ABSTRACT**

### **Women leadership in governance networks.**

A case study of Site-B in Khayelitsha

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In this mini-thesis I explore the connection between women in the community and women leaders specifically in the Site B Section of Khayelitsha. I investigate amongst other, the social, environmental and economic challenges that women face.

I explore feminism and patriarchy in order to better understand the women of Khayelitsha. In order to explore the study appropriately it was important to group the women separately in the qualitative interviews. There were two groups; the first group was women from the community where we discussed their experiences in their community. The second group comprised of women leaders (in local structures such as street committees, the Khayelitsha Development Forum, and political party counsellors) in the area. These women have rather unique experiences and that is an aspect that was critically explored.

I then argued how safety and security affects women and their quality of life. The results from the in-depth interviews showed in many instances a close correlation with the literature on the topic. At the same time, the analysis of the interviews and responses to the questions also indicate additional dimensions of experiential meaning that can be ascribed to the in-depth exploration of the existential situation of women in South African society and the various challenges they experience. This was especially true of the B Section area in Khayelitsha, which was selected for investigation and from which the interviewees were drawn

**November 2015**

**DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE**

I hereby declare that this mini thesis titled *Women leadership in governance networks. A case study of site B in Khayelitsha* is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Chwayita Nqiwa

Signature: .....

Date: .....



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>KDF</b>	Khayelitsha Development Forum
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>DA</b>	Democratic Alliance
<b>RWM</b>	Kwazulu-Natal Rural Women's Movement
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>NDA</b>	National Development Agency
<b>SCAT</b>	Social Change Assistance Trust
<b>ACTs</b>	Areas Co-ordinating Teams
<b>CDC</b>	Community Development Co-operative
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-Based Organisations
<b>IDP</b>	Integrated Development Planning



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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The complexity of social and socio-economic structures of South African post-apartheid society has been debated and discussed at length in forums, research studies and articles (Magubane, 1994). The various forms of marginalization and inequities of the past are in many instances still to be fully addressed and the legacy of the apartheid past has created a wide array of critical issues and problems that are still being dealt with today.

A central issue that flows from this general debate is the problem of women leadership and female social, political and economic empowerment. Women in South African society face particular problems in a postmodern and post-apartheid environment. These include issues of gender disparity in many shapes and forms (Callinicos, 1996). As the preamble to the South African Women's Charter for Effective Equality states: "As women, citizens of South Africa, we are here to claim our rights. We want recognition and respect for the work we do in the home, in the workplace and in the community. We claim full and equal participation in the creation of a non-sexist, non-racist democratic society" (The South African Women's Charter for Effective Equality, 1994).

Therefore, to counter these disparities and inequalities, female leadership at both grassroots and governmental level has emerged in recent years. This thesis focuses on an exploration of the emergence of women leaders at grassroots level in Site B in Khayelitsha, and the ways that these forms of advancement and leadership are linked to the interrelationships between women in the community and other sectors.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Women have been affected by the history and evolution of political structures within South African society in a number of ways. In many instances, they have been radically disenfranchised, not only as a result of the biased political system, but have also suffered inequality from gender bias in a largely patriarchal society. This is evidenced in studies such as *Many Faces of Gender Inequality Contemporary Feminist Theory* by Amartya Sen (2001) and *South African Education and the Ideology of Patriarchy* (2001) by Coetzee, among others.

Furthermore, "despite efforts made to ensure that female representation is achieved at all levels of governance, women are still underrepresented in many government and non-government organizations particularly in positions of power and leadership" (Kiamba, 2008). These disparities are underlined by statistics which indicate that, while women constitute the majority of voters, "...they are severely underrepresented in party structures and on party lists to the extent that while gender equality is enshrined in the party constitutions and manifestos, it is not integrated in party structures" (Kiamba, 2008).

This brings to the fore a number of important theoretical and practical issues which have been addressed in this study. These will include various trajectories of feminist critique, theory and discourse as they relate to gender equality and gender inequity, as well as the way that women advance and help one another within biased and patriarchal systems. These theoretical issues are related to empirical and practical realities that are experiential in nature and which affect the lives of women in the region under discussion. These have been explicated on in the theoretical section of this mini-thesis.

Therefore, in the light of the above, one could refer to the negative effects of poverty and economic disenfranchisement of women in both the urban and rural context. Additionally, this refers to the socio-psychological and political ways in which women have been adversely affected. These realities are however counteracted by women

leaders in the community, who are empowering themselves and others to redress gender as well as political and economic imbalances.

Kiamba points out that these advancements in female empowerment have not been easy and women in South Africa, as well as in many other African countries, are still struggling for fairness, equality and representation. As Kiamba (2008) emphasizes:

Women continue to aspire to leadership positions in all spheres of governance both in the public and private sectors. Great strides have been made in the political realm, and women's participation in both the freedom struggles and democratic processes of many African countries have been notable. However, this participation has not always translated into equal representation in political leadership positions. Once elections are conducted, and positions are assigned, one realizes that women are no longer visible (Kiamba, 2008: 7).

This situation and the need for female leadership in the country raises a number of complex and often contentious issues that have been explored in this mini-thesis. Central to this problem is the interrelationship between the need for female leadership at all levels in order to redress previous imbalances and the issue of female identity. This particular dilemma is expressed by one commentator as follows: "Contemporary African women sometimes think of themselves as walking a political/gender tightrope" (Mikell, 1997:1).

On the one hand, they are faced with a wide array of social, economic and political problems which need to be addressed. At the same time, as Mikell (1997) succinctly puts it, they are "...grappling with how to affirm their own identities while transforming societal notions of gender and familial roles" (Mikell, 1997:1). The issue of identity therefore is a focal point that has been explored in this mini-thesis as it pertains to issues of grassroots leadership.

An example of the above and the way in which women help themselves would be the WHEAT Women's Fund, which was founded in 1998 by a group of South African feminists to encourage grassroots women's leadership as apartheid ended. This

endeavour was aimed at helping and empowering grassroots women who "...mostly do not have sustainable incomes and entry opportunities into the economy which is crucial to their development and that of their children" (WHEAT: Women's fund, 1998). It was also intended to assist women at this level who did not have access to formal funding.

There are many other examples. Another would be the NDA or National Development Agency, which is a body that contributes to the eradication of poverty through development funding and capacity building. Importantly, this Agency supports civil as well as governmental development actions. These service organizations will be expanded on in more detail in the introduction to this mini-thesis.

In essence, this mini-thesis explores the various challenges that women face in adopting leadership roles. This includes an analysis of the problems that women face at a grassroots level in establishing themselves as a viable force for change. These barriers are not only political but include socio-cultural obstacles relating to the societal milieu in which they live, as well as the balance between work and family.

As noted, central to this exploration of grassroots leadership is the question and problematics of female identity within the South African and local context. This refers to political as well as social and cultural identity. This will include an analysis of various women's groups and income generating projects or IGPs, as well as street committees, community outreach projects and civic organizations. A good example of this would be the Khayelitsha Development Forum, which is run at a community level with funding from the government. Throughout the exploration of these various incentives and projects, the focus will be on the way that female identity is constructed and defined in the social and political context, as well as the way that women empower themselves and others.

Meaning 'new home', Khayelitsha was intended to provide housing to all 'legal' residents of the Cape Peninsula, whether they were in squatter camps or in existing townships. Proposed by government in 1983, by 1990 the population of Khayelitsha

was 450,000 and unemployment stood at 80 per cent. Only 14 per cent lived in core housing, with 54 per cent in serviced shacks and 32 per cent in un-serviced areas. A handful of residents had electricity and most families had to fetch water from public taps. In conditions of overcrowding and lawlessness, unofficial councils elected by community members maintained social control in the neighbourhood, and enforced physical punishment upon adults and children who broke the local codes of behaviour. Rates of domestic violence, rape, child abuse and murder increased dramatically during the 1990s on the Cape Flats. Police presence was minimal and in this climate, vigilante activities grew. (Source: [http://www.capetown.at/heritage/history/apart\\_influx\\_shanty\\_art.htm](http://www.capetown.at/heritage/history/apart_influx_shanty_art.htm))

Poverty is closely linked to factors such as low skills levels as well as unemployment and retrenchment. As one study of this area emphasises: "...the absence of employment opportunities that result in feelings of helplessness in turn lead to drug and alcohol abuse. Thus the family and home in this environment becomes dislocated, which in turn affects the wider community and society as a whole" (Ndingaye, 2009).

**Figure 1: Economic Profile: Khayelitsha Site-B**

<b>Khayelitsha Labour Force Indicators</b>	<b>Black African</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Population aged 15 to 64 years</b>	<b>270 798</b>	<b>1 590</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>2 160</b>	<b>274 986</b>
<b>Labour Force</b>	<b>176 280</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>1 755</b>	<b>179 235</b>
Employed	108 735	639	102	105	1 512	111 093
Unemployed	67 545	288	24	42	243	68 142
<b>Not Economically Active</b>	<b>94 518</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>95 751</b>
Discouraged Work-seekers	11 061	90	9	3	36	11 199
Other not economically active	83 457	573	66	87	369	84 552
<b>Rates %</b>						
Unemployment rate	38.32%	31.07%	19.05%	28.57%	13.85%	38.02%
Labour absorption rate	40.15%	40.19%	50.75%	44.30%	70.00%	40.40%
Labour Force participation rate	65.10%	58.30%	62.69%	62.03%	81.25%	65.18%

Definitions:

Unemployment rate is the proportion of the labour force that is unemployed.

The labour absorption rate is the proportion of working age (15 to 64 years) population that is employed.

The labour force participation rate is the proportion of the working age population that is either employed or unemployed.

Note: Based on available data as supplied by Statistics South Africa, the people categorised as living in collective living quarters are included in the "Other not economically active" category.

*(Source: Compiled by Strategic Development Information and GIS Department (SDI & GIS), City of Cape Town 2011 Census data supplied by Statistics South Africa (Based on information available at the time of compilation as released by Statistics South Africa [https://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/2011CensusSuburbs/2011\\_Census\\_CT\\_Suburb\\_Khayelitsha\\_Profile.pdf](https://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/2011CensusSuburbs/2011_Census_CT_Suburb_Khayelitsha_Profile.pdf))*

One should also bear in mind that the ideal of uplifting others is contentious theoretically and disputed by many women. This refers to the interrogation of the concept the homogeneity of intention and purpose among women and the question of divisions between women. This will be examined in the section on theoretical perspectives in this study. On the other hand there are numerous studies in Africa as well as elsewhere in the world that refer to women helping and uplifting other women. For example, a study by Phillips (2001) discusses the way that women empower one another both socially and economically. These aspects are explored and expanded on in this mini-thesis. However, the opposing view will also be considered. This also includes the debate about whether women have been 'appropriated' to a male-centred world where they in fact continue the subjugation of other women.

Another facet of the discussion that is intimately linked to the above is the wider ranging issue of Khayelitsha in a political context. This would of necessity include the dynamics of the interaction between grassroots empowerment and politics and the larger governmental political structures and how this intersection facilitates or retards female advancement and leadership.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The central intention of this mini-thesis is the exploration of female leadership at grassroots level and the degree to which it can be understood as a combination of a number of factors and variables, such as the interrelationship between identity and female leadership roles, as well as the obstacles that face female leaders. This dealt with issues such as female leadership in a patriarchal society and culture and how this impacts the motivation and ability to lead and uplift others and the community. Related to this is the issue of female identity and how this aspect interfaces with leadership roles and the efficacy, or otherwise, of this leadership. In this regard, one

can refer again to the view put forward by Mikell (1997). To reiterate: “Contemporary African women sometimes think of themselves as walking a political/gender tightrope” (Mikell, 1997:1), and that they are “...grappling with how to affirm their own identities while transforming societal notions of gender and familial roles” (Mikell, 1997:1).

The above issues and questions suggest that leadership should be understood dynamically and in terms of a holistic framework of forces and needs that create a particular social, economic and political environment. Concomitant with the above is the assumption that women succeed at a grassroots level when they help one another. This is an assumption that was interrogated at both a theoretical and practical level. This mini-thesis also tests the assumption that the ability to understand and recognize the needs of the community provide support and strength, which in turn helps to foster female identity.



#### **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW / THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The background to this mini-thesis draws from a wide range of contemporary feminist and post-structural theories. The intention is to provide a broad theoretical understanding from modern concepts that can help sharpen and define the issues that have been focused on in the interviews and qualitative research section of this study.

In a general theoretical sense, the issue of women in leadership has been the focus of a great deal of theoretical discussion across many disciplines (Hanish, 2001). This debate has been linked to subjects such as women’s rights and gender inequalities in modern society. These issues have been initiated by the fact that there is a gross disparity in terms of gender when it comes to leadership roles in modern society, which is an aspect that is particularly relevant to Africa and the developing world (Hanish, 2001). In this sense, we could refer to the vast body of literature on the issue of gender marginalization and stereotype construction that emanate from a male-centred and patriarchal world view.

Many critics have questioned the authoritarian and male-oriented view of leadership and suggested that women have qualities and advantages that make them at least as effective in leadership roles as men. In this regard, Coleman (2003) refers to a number of “orthodoxies” linked to gender and leadership. These refer to norms that prescribe an inferior status to women, as well as the stereotype of a male-centred or ‘macho’ style of male leadership, which is a stereotype that is not even realistically applicable even to men (Coleman, 2003: 325). This view is supported by Turock (2001) and it has been explored in this study, it suggests that women have certain qualities that deserve greater recognition and acceptance in terms of leadership potential.

From a leadership theory point of view, one also has to take into account that modern management and leadership culture no longer advocate the rigid patriarchal model of leadership (Turock, 2001). There is much more emphasis on the promotion of flexible leadership styles, which promote aspects such as individualism and an introspective leadership model, and which concurs with many studies of female leadership attributes. This leads to the assertion that a more comprehensive understanding of leadership, especially the women’s role in leadership, will have a positive impact on the effective running of business and organizational structures, as well as in the fair and optimum distribution of human resources.

The question of female leadership is related not only to the issue of certain assumed and inherent female qualities, but should also be considered against the background of gender inequalities in a society that acts as an obstruction to acceptance and recognition. This is a complex and problematic area that is of cardinal concern in any discussion of female leadership advancement. This issue is important as it emphasizes the fact that female leadership qualities will not be recognized if there is no gender equality in the society.

With reference to the above, and from a post-structural feminist position, it is important to emphasize the view from sociological theory, all reality is socially constructed. This means that stereotypical and cultural views of what women are capable of are not based in reality. It is therefore not a fixed and unshakable truth, but is rather a view of women that is ‘constructed’ or made up by the society. This



refers to the view that "...the world of knowledge was constituted by cultural authority figures. Men not only defined leadership, they also determined what was incorporated in knowledge about it" (Turock, 2001: 115). In this regard the work of Berger and Luckmann (1996), as well as the critique of sex and gender in Foucault's work, has formed the general theoretical underlying to this study. This background will also reference various theoretical perspectives which argue that women have been obstructed in their advancement by the process of downgrading their qualities and potential in the society. For example, Turock (2001) notes that "research in the 1950s focused on understanding men's leadership behaviour. Women who did not conform to masculine models were eliminated from studies that invariably concluded leadership was predominantly a male endowment" and "research continually reiterates that internal barriers kept women from being right for leadership roles" (Turock, 2001: 115).

More specifically, various African and South African feminist theoretical trajectories will be taken into account; for example the works of Professor Amina Mama, among others, have been consulted in order to provide a comprehensive overview of African feminism and the way that these theoretical stances intersect with female grassroots issues in Khayelitsha.

As noted, a Foucauldian theoretical stance on gender is foundational for the perspective that will be adopted in this study. This refers to the view that gender is constructed by power structures and that it should not be seen from an essentialist point of view. Gender and female identity are therefore seen as being 'discursive'. Attention has been given to Amartya Sen's notion of the / his various forms of freedom and how they pertain to gender and to the region under discussion. These and other theoretical trajectories have been juxtaposed with the practical findings on the ground from interviews and other methodological processes that will be described in the following section.

It should also be emphasised at the outset that an existentialist feminist perspective is a stance that seems to be the most appropriate for the aims of this study. This perspective emphasises the awareness of human identity and difference and also

takes into account the view that "...feminism influences every sphere of human existence" (D'Souza, 2005).

Another central theoretical area of discourse that was used to inform this study is the so-called third wave of feminism. This refers to the more critical and open-ended concept of feminism which turned its critical techniques back on feminism's own long standing habit of making claims on behalf of women. These purportedly universal pronouncements, it was pointed out, failed to take into account the differences between women of diverse races, sexual orientations, nationalities and classes. The general feeling was that there is nothing to be said about women as such and we must become more sensitive to the many conceptions of femininity found in different societies (D'Souza, 2005).

The above quotation has been explored in greater depth in the relevant section in the mini-thesis. It is relevant to the present study for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is a view that puts into question the idealistic notion that all women support and uplift other women. In this regard one could refer to an article by Lisa Quast (2010), entitled *Women Helping Other Women? Not so Much, it Seems*. The author of this article gives many possible reasons for the lack of unity found in some instances among women:

- a) We still live in a male-dominated society, so women feel like they are competing for a smaller piece of the pie.
- b) Women are still new to the mentoring game whereas men have been mentoring other men for generations. Many women have never been mentored or provided mentoring to others.
- c) Many women are too busy to help each other. One woman explained how she needed to be highly strategic in whom she helped because there just were not enough hours in the day. As she said: "I own a business, work full time, I have two small children, do charity work, hobbies. I have a wonderful husband, but he doesn't do half the amount of things I do" (Lisa Quast, 2010).

Secondly, it is a stance that refers to different types of feminism and its development within different environments and cultures. This is a perspective that is especially

relevant to the study of women and women leaders in particular in the matter under discussion in this mini-thesis.

A wide range of resources have been used for this mini-thesis. These include research studies, databases and documents from both online and offline sources. These sources were analysed and their information thematically extrapolated into a central database for use as background and reference material to support the qualitative and empirical research. The literature review was directed at a number of interrelated aspects. These aspects are centred on the main analytic exploration of the problems and obstacles that face women in South Africa. This perspective takes into account factors such as male hegemony and female stereotypes. This focus takes into account the issue of the intersections between grassroots leaders and leadership at governmental levels and how this relationship fosters or hampers female leadership in the area in question. A central thematic that was brought to the fore on the selection of literature was the issue of leadership from a female perspective.

The growing body of literature that was taken into account, explores the dramatic changes in the past century with regard to the position of women in the workplace and in leadership and will in turn lead to various causative factors for gender inequalities which include not only gender issues but also historical racial, social and other factors and variables. As mentioned previously, one should also take into account the fact that, although the leadership literature in recent years has begun to include studies on women and leadership, historically most of the studies on this subject did not see gender as an important issue and did not deal to any great extent with the life experiences of women. As Fine (2009) suggests, the views and representations dealing with women in leadership were articulated by men and based on the experiences of a male-centred worldview (Fine, 2009).

Coleman (2003) refers to a number of 'orthodoxies' linked to gender and leadership. These refer to norms that prescribe an inferior status to women as well as the stereotype of a male-centred or 'macho' style of male leadership (Coleman, 2003: 325). It is suggested that this is part of the reason why women fare so badly in terms of leadership statistics. This aspect is further underscored by other studies, for

example Fischlmayr (2002) states that women are still under-represented in management. It is generally concluded in many studies that it is more difficult for women than men to become leaders and to succeed in male-dominated leadership roles (Eagly, 2007).

The perceived gap between the leadership performance of men and women shows that men are often viewed as better leaders and women often adopt masculine behaviours to fit into male-dominated hierarchical structures and systems. However, there are many studies that show that in terms of actual leadership qualities, there are no differences in gender. A good example is a study on the increased leadership roles and competence of women in leadership by Lockwood (2004) entitled *The glass ceiling: domestic and international perspectives*. Lockwood notes that advances have been made in recent years in addressing the issue of the advancement of women in the workplace and in the corporate environment. These and other views have been taken into account as a prolegomena to this study.

One more important barrier is self-perception and self-efficacy and the all-important issue of identity. This refers to the view that women may not have the necessary self-confidence to be leaders as a result of views and perceptions generated in a male orientated society. In this regard, a study by Fischlmayr entitled *Female self-perception as barrier to international careers?* (2002) provides some useful insights. The author states that little has been written about the women's own fault for not being selected and that "...women themselves contribute to their under-representation in international management (Fischlmayr, 2002: 773).

When discussing the issue of female qualities and advantages suited to leadership roles, one also has to bear in mind the more orthodox feminist perspective on this issue. This refers to the view that:

...Feminism does not claim women are superior to men nor does it esteem masculine or feminine behaviours at the expense of the other. It does reject negative cultural images of women as weak or incompetent and affirms their ability to be strong, intelligent and ethical Leaders. (Turock, 2001:115)

Postmodern feminism has criticised that modern feminism only spoke about white middle-class women:

During much of its history, most feminist movements and theories had leaders who were predominantly middle-class white women from Western Europe and North America. However, at least since Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech to American feminists, women of other races have proposed alternative feminisms. This trend accelerated in the 1960s with the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the collapse of European colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, parts of Latin America and Southeast Asia. Since that time, women in former European colonies and the Third World have proposed "Post-colonial" and "Third World" feminisms. Some Postcolonial Feminists, such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, are critical of Western feminism for being ethnocentric. Black feminists, such as Angela Davis and Alice Walker, share this view.

(Source: [http://www.gender.cawaterinfo.net/knowledge\\_base/rubricator/feminism\\_e.htm](http://www.gender.cawaterinfo.net/knowledge_base/rubricator/feminism_e.htm))

This is an important perspective as the view of female qualities and advantages is not intended to be sexist in any sense but rather to redress the inequality and imbalance in perception of female leadership.

A study that emphasizes the positive and unique qualities of female leadership is *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* by Afkhami et al. (2003). The authors refer to the fact that studies from various disciplines come to a similar conclusion, namely that "...there is a direct causal relationship between women's involvement in social life and the strengthening of values, attitudes, and behaviours that reflect free, fair and tolerant social interaction" and that "achieving sustainable development in developing countries, or in less developed areas within developed countries, is unlikely in the absence of women's leadership" (Afkhami et al., 2003).

This perception of the unique qualities that women can contribute to leadership roles is also emphasized in an article by Schyns et al. (2008) which states that "...modern organizations are working towards, and actually needing, a modern leadership style that is characterized by more stereotypically female qualities, such as concern for others" (Schyns et al., 2008). This aspect is also related to the increasing realization

that transformational leadership is a form of leadership that is needed in the contemporary working and business environment. In this context there are two theoretical forms of leadership styles. These are referred to as masculinised and transformational, both of which are explored in this mini-thesis.

While the above provides a broad background of feminism and leadership theory, the present study is more selective in issues pertaining to the African and South African context. This does not mean that broader feminist trajectories of thought have not been referred to, but rather that there will be a greater focus on South African feminism in relation to the areas and context being studied. This refers to studies such as *Unbound by Theory and Naming: Survival Feminism and the Women of the South African Victoria Mxenge Housing and Development Association* by Becky L. Jacobs (2011), among others. This study states that:

The emergence of a uniquely African formulation of feminism is one of the most energizing developments in feminist theory and discourse in recent history. As African women confront unprecedented economic and political challenges, they also are questioning and, in some instances redefining, individual and societal orthodoxies of gender and family roles.

(Unbound by Theory and Naming: Survival Feminism and the Women of the South African, 2011)

This uniquely African formulation of feminism forms one of the central theoretical trajectories of the present study, which will be expanded on in more detail in the full literary reviews section.

## **1.5 DISCUSSION**

There is a growing body of literature that was taken into account, which explores the dramatic changes in the past century with regard to the position of women in the workplace and in leadership. This in turn leads to various causative factors for gender inequalities which include not only gender issues but also historical racial,

social and other factors and variables. As previously mentioned, one should also take into account the fact that although the leadership literature in recent years has begun to include studies on women and leadership, historically most of the studies on this subject did not see gender as an important issue and did not deal to any great extent with the life experiences of women. As Fine (2009) suggests, the views and representations dealing with women in leadership were articulated by men and based on the experiences of a male-centred worldview (Fine, 2009).

The literature also provides a wide range of studies and articles on the obstacles and barriers in advancement in leadership roles for women. This is a central concern of the present study. For example, the literature refers to the fact that while there have been more women leaders in various sectors of society in recent decades, there are some areas where female advancement, particularly in leadership roles, has faced social as well as cultural obstacles, preventing women from reaching their potential. In an article entitled *Women and Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change* by Hamrick (2009), the author refers to studies that explore the "...range of circumstantial, environmental, and structural factors that limit women's access to leadership opportunities and explore individual, organizational and societal strategies for change" (Hamrick, 2009). This study also refers to areas where these stereotypes have broken down and where there is clear evidence of female leadership capability.

These views have resulted in a deconstruction and questioning of gender disparities, especially in the light of modern theories of leadership that tend to emphasize a more transformational, as opposed to a transactional, model of effective leadership in an interconnected and interdependent modern world (Wilmot, 1987). The difference between these two forms of organizational and business leadership illustrates some of the central issues and questions relating to modern performance rates. In essence, "transformational leadership comprises different dimensions, namely, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspiring motivation and idealised influence" (Birgit Schyns, Anne von Elverfeldt & Jörg Felfe, 2008:596). Transformational as opposed to transactional forms of leadership place emphasis on the promotion of a sense self-efficacy and self-motivation among employees.

The above issues and questions suggest that leadership should be understood dynamically and in terms of a holistic framework of forces and needs that create a particular social, economic and political environment. Concomitant with the above is the assumption that women succeed at grassroots level when they help one another. This is an assumption that was interrogated at both a theoretical and practical level. This mini-thesis tests the assumption that the ability to understand and recognize the needs of the community provide support and strength, which in turn helps to foster female identity.

It is not the intention of this mini-thesis to cover all these aspects in detail but rather to selectively focus on the issue of female leadership and women empowerment in a specific location of South Africa. The area in question is Khayelitsha (Site-B) and the focus in the mini-thesis will be on female leaders, leadership and the obstacles and problems that face these leaders in their attempt to empower women in their fight against gender prejudice and discrimination and in their struggle to uplift their community.

A survey of perceptions of women in Khayelitsha, through in-depth interviews by Cheryl McEwan (2003), reveals some important aspects about community needs and local socio-economic development in relation to governance and government. It is being suggested that the leaders and people at the grassroots level are often not being consulted or included in government projects and initiatives. This is an issue that was tested and explored in the in-depth interviews conducted as part of this mini-thesis.

Croce-Galis makes the point that it is crucial to the understanding of the needs of women at grassroots level in Khayelitsha (Site B). This refers to the types of programmes and initiatives that "...women have identified as important and have shown to be effective in meeting their needs" (Croce-Galis, 2008).

The ability of women to run community structures can be seen in the following example: one of the most successful community-run housing savings and building schemes in the Western Cape is the Victoria Mxenge Scheme (Khayelitsha, Site B). This scheme has been created with the assistance of the South African Homeless People's Federation (McEwan, 2003). While this scheme, which is mainly controlled



and run by women in the Khayelitsha area, was originally viewed with a level of doubt and circumspection about the ability of women to run a scheme of this nature, those who doubted the ability of women to lead at a grassroots level have been proved wrong. As McEwan (2003) states:

... within 5 years of its founding in 1991, Victoria Mxenge was a flagship housing development with 140 new houses; many subsequent schemes were directly inspired by its success. There are now 78 housing saving schemes operating in Western Cape, nine in Site B alone, and numbers continue to grow.

(McEwan, 2003: 27)

This scheme and its success is also indicative of the importance of community-based enterprises and projects which function independently of local government but which use government subsidies and the capacity-building skills of NGOs (McEwan, 2003).

Female leadership at grassroots level can be understood as a combination of a number of factors such as the interrelationship between identity and female leadership roles and the obstacles that face female leaders. This deals with issues such as female leadership in a patriarchal society and culture, and how this impacts the motivation and ability to lead and uplift others and the community..

## **1.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The discourse on female empowerment, gender discrimination and female identity in the post-colonial and postmodern world is one that is not only complex but also related to many other dominant issues that affect modern society. The issues of female empowerment, gender discrimination and female identity are all theoretically and practically interwoven with many other aspects of modern society. They include important variables such as cultural perceptions and norms, economics, political stances, governance and government, poverty and community-upliftment and a host of related and interlinked aspects and factors. These aspects also impact on the

need for female leadership and female unity at the grassroots level and in areas where social and gender discrimination have a cultural and historical legacy.

The aims and intentions of this study are predominantly to provide more insight and understanding of the issues and problems that women leaders face at a grassroots level in a particular area of South Africa. This will of necessity include a wide range of variables and related factors, such as the intersection between larger political structures and community initiatives.

The central envisaged outcome of this study is that it will hopefully elucidate various areas of concern and help to highlight problem areas that retard or bedevil female advancement in this area, as well as suggesting possibilities of future growth and development for women and female leaders.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

#### **2.1.1 Introduction: The democratic rationale and gender policy**

The issue of gender empowerment and the formal governmental policies that are linked to this concept should firstly be understood against the broader background and context of the principle of democracy that informs the ethos of the country. The foundational ethos and rationale of democracy are very loosely encapsulated in the following definition: "Democracy by definition means the government by the people. That means that all the people should be able to have their say in one way or another in everything that affects their lives" (What is Democracy?). While this is simplistic, it does suggest the central, broad ethos of what a democratic system is intended to achieve. It also emphasises the cardinal point that no group or sector of the society should be discriminated against or reduced in any way in terms of their capacity to participate in the fair and egalitarian process of election and government.

These simple foundational aspects in turn lead to an assessment of the nature and definition of democracy. Hobson lists the central institutional guarantees for a functional democracy. These include: the freedom to form and join organisations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; the right of political leaders to compete for support; alternative sources of information; free and fair elections and institutional mechanisms to ensure that government is dependent on votes and other forms of preference (Hobson, 2003).

From the above and other perceptions and definitions of what constitutes the necessary dimensions of modern democracy, a number of pillars of democratic consolidation and signs of sustainability can be isolated.

These can be listed as follows.

1. A primary requirement is a functioning multiparty parliamentary system, which includes proper and transparent election processes and which is perceived to be both free and fair.
2. Freedom of expression. As Hobson states, this aspect is central to the adequate functioning of a society which claims to be democratic. However, it should also be noted that this freedom of expression must be supported and bolstered by an institutional framework. "If there is a freedom of expression yet there exists no state or law to protect it, this liberty has an extremely provisional and uncertain nature" (Hobson, 2003: 57).
3. It follows from the above that a democratic state should have a strong and vigorous sense of constitutionalism and rule of law. This has to be firmly supported by the various relevant institutions, such as, for example, the Constitutional Court, Human rights Commission, etc. (Muthien et al., 2000: 2).
4. A very important aspect, and one which is especially relevant to the modern South African state, are mechanisms of accountability. These include elements that facilitate accountability, such as the legal support for freedom of access to information and laws and processes to enforce transparency in order to expose corruption.
5. A professional civil service functioning on the basis of constitutional values, which includes fiscal accountability (Muthien et al. 2000: 2).
6. Mechanisms and processes that ensure citizen participation in government, such as public hearings of parliamentary committees as well as the all important aspects of public contribution and participation in policy making.
7. A number of critics refer to the vital aspect of an integrated and developed economic infrastructure (Muthien et al. 2000:2).

One of the main indicators of a healthy, liberal democracy is a robust civil society (McDonough, Shin & Moises, 1998: 919-953). This refers to the ability of civil organisations to represent the various and diverse interests of society, which means

"...widening access to and public participation in public institutions and processes" (Muthien et al., 2000:2). The importance of this aspect should be stressed as it ensures the dynamic give and take that is so necessary for a healthy democracy. In this regard one could possibly argue that in the South African political situation, this process takes place but with some important provisos, *one of which is the issue of gender disparities*.

Furthermore, Hobson (2003: 58) states that freedom of expression is supported through this process. Hobson goes on to refer to three conditions essential for democracy:

- Meaningful and wide-ranging competition among individuals and groups. It is stressed that this competition should be "...for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force".
- A highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policy through regular and fair elections. In this regard no major group should be excluded.
- The importance of a certain level of civil and political liberties, which should include "...freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organisations, and which also should be "...sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation" (Hobson, 2003: 58).

These three foundational requirements form a solid basis from which to assess the South African situation. While many of the above requirements are fulfilled in the South African situation, there are some glaring fault lines and omissions. These include the question of the rule of law, access to information, crime and corruption and gender issues.

One could broaden the issue of the complexity of women in African society by including another variable; namely, the assumption that "...educated and elite women are seen as ideologically far more advanced (and therefore feminist) and rural/ordinary African women are seen as parochial and pre-feminist" (Mikell, 1997 407).

This refers to class differences within the African and South African context. These class differences can also be used to show that in many instances, African women do not help to assist the upliftment of other African women (Mikell, 1997: 407). This is a dimension of this mini-thesis that will be more fully explored via the in-depth interviews. What is significant at this juncture is that these class differences are also seen by critics, such as Mikell, as having little real impact on the way women interact and collaborate in terms of communal female empowerment.

This is clearly suggested in the following quotation:

It has been my position that an ideological dichotomy is largely negated by African cultural traditions which legitimate female organizations and collective actions by women in the interest of women, an awareness shared by women at all points along the continuum. This continuum appears to be grounded in African communal, historical, symbolic, and experiential constructs, rather than in cultural constructs based on Western individualism and competition. (Mikell, 1997: 407)

This basic view provides an essential foundation from which to understand the predicament and the position of women in contemporary society as well as the history of the institutionalisation of women's rights in the political framework of the country. As Shiela Meintjies (1996) states:

The 1993 Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, with a Charter of Fundamental Rights, heralded a significant moment in South Africa's transition to democracy. In particular it shifted the parameters within which women are able to claim their rights as equal citizens in an ostensibly 'non-racial and non-sexist' society. (p.47)

Furthermore, Meintjies, in the same study, also notes that: "The inclusion of 'women' as a category along with race in the preamble and in the Constitution itself was the result of challenges made by women's organisations to the Constitutional negotiating process ..." (Meintjies, 1996: 47). This refers to the extensive story of the fight for women's rights in the country, leading to the resultant changes in the Constitution of

South Africa and the creation of a non-sexist framework for the equitable and ethical functioning of the society.

In this regard one could briefly refer to the Women's National Coalition which was formed in April 1992, and which comprised four regional coalitions and approximately 60 national organisations. Its objective was to "ensure equality" (Meintjies, 1996: 47). This coalition came about as an initiative of the larger African National Congress Women's League (ANC WL). It is significant to note that in the period before the unbanning of the ANC, women in the country, and particularly those involved in ANC WL, had been deeply concerned about ensuring that the issue of women's rights be placed on the political agenda of the country and that this should be one of the central areas of focus in terms of the national liberation. It is in this light that one should view the launch of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in April 1992. In terms of the central ethos of democracy and the search for equal representation, the launch of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in April 1992 saw:

...women from different class backgrounds, race groups, political parties, from different kinds of women's organisations including the Church, welfare and the health sectors, rub shoulders with one another. They found much to agree upon in the search for common experiences, although their commonalities were based upon recognition of the diversity of culture, race and class.

(Meintjies, 1996: 47).

Shireen Hassim (2003) also emphasises some of the above points concerning democratic consolidation in her study, entitled *The Gender Pact and Democratic Consolidation: Institutionalising Gender Equality in the South African State*. She states that "the transition to democracy in South Africa ushered in a formal institutional framework and a government that has been held up as a model of serious commitment to the ideal of gender equality" (Hassim, 2003: 505).

However, what should also be taken into account and a pertinent point regarding democracy which has particular relevance to the South African situation and the

central question of this dissertation, is the view of Methuin, Khosa and Mugabane (2000). They state that, while democratic elections may be achieved, the sustainability and the continuance of that democracy cannot be taken for granted. This caveat is also referred to by Hassim, who states that "yet there has been little research into the extent to which increased representation has translated into real gains in reducing gender inequalities" (Hassim, 2003: 505). It is this aspect and concern that will form a major part of the practical section of this dissertation.

The above also refers to the view that while there has been a significant increase in the number of democracies in the world which increased from 21 in 1950 to 51 in 1996 (Methuin, Khosa & Mugabane, 2000), there are also many instances where democratic governments were replaced by non-democratic regimes. This implies that a relatively young democracy such as South Africa is not considered to be consolidated as a democracy as yet.

As Sibanyoni states in a paper entitled *The Consolidation of Democracy in South Africa* (1999: 1), issues such as the relatively unfavourable economic conditions, the high rate of poverty, unemployment, disease and crime, as well as the complex ethnic mix and political makeup in the country, and gender and other inequalities, are all factors that need to be taken into account in ascertaining present and future democratic potential.

As has been noted by a number of theorists in this field that there is a great deal of debate and dissension about the precise definition of democracy. A generally acceptable and initial definition of democracy is provided by Schumpeter (1943) who defined democracy as "that Institutional arrangement for arriving at political decision in which individuals acquire the power to decide by a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Sibanyoni, 1999: 3).

This definition is considered by many to be too narrow, as Hobson notes: theorists have realised that "...simply equating democracy with elections is insufficient" (Hobson, 2003: 56). Schumpeter's definition has consequently been criticised for not allowing for the power and role of the electorate in a modern democracy (Sibanyoni, 1999: 3).



A more liberal and expansive view of democracy is one that places greater emphasis on social and economic rights. In this regard, one could refer to the view that a democratic constitution should not only be a guarantee of political rights but should also ensure equal rights in the society in terms of effective participation, as well as in terms of the political agenda (Held 1996: 284-7). Hobson (2003:56) makes the point that democratic elections are "...a good starting point but alone are insufficient as they do not include the civil and political liberties that give value to the process set out by Schumpeter".

In this regards he also refers to Robert Dahl's understanding of 'polyarchy', based on the twin dimensions of competition and participation, which is the equivalent of liberal democracy (Dahl, 1977:8). In this light one could refer once again to Hassim's article above. She states that: "A central concern ...is to examine whether the political agenda of equity, expressed through the demands for representation, has enabled the redistributive agenda of empowerment through the strategic use of public resources" (Hassim, 2003: 505). It is possibly this question that informs much of the contemporary debate on this subject.

The above brief outline is intended to suggest the context in which we should understand and situate the issue of gender in South Africa. Policies intended to redress or rectify gender disparities and inequalities are therefore extremely important, not only in their own right from an ethical and moral point of view, but also from the point of view of *the necessary requirements for an emerging democracy*. The following sections of this chapter will outline policy aspects and issues as they relate to the broader social, political and governmental context of the country.

This assessment is also supported by other comments from women. Mercia Arendse, an ANC councillor, says that she is "...fighting a continuous battle against men trying to fob off soft issues like food schemes and social issues on to her" (Nieuwoudt, 2008). Once again, this reiterates the stereotypes of women, in this case the idea that women are not capable of dealing with more serious and

responsible issues. This has an obvious impact on the perception of women as leaders.

Arendse also states that while government policy is positive in terms of gender equality, this rhetoric is often not realised at the grassroots level. "There are still too many men in leadership positions who continue to look at women in a patriarchal way" (Nieuwoudt, 2008). Importantly, another interview in the report by Nieuwoudt states that the problem lies in the interpretation of what gender means and what needs to be done about the gender discourse. For the most part, equity has become a numerical thing. When a numerical target is met, it is wrongly believed that the issue of gender has been dealt with (Nieuwoudt, 2008).

## 2.2 GOVERNMENT POLICIES



As has been emphasised above, one of the foundations of a democracy is equality and the principle of equality between different groups, as well as the implementation of policy measures to ensure that an ethos of democracy is initiated and sustained in the country. This is particularly pertinent to the situation in South Africa, where gender disparities still exist in many sectors of the society.

The issue of gender empowerment is one that is perceived as being vital to the future of the country. This sentiment is reflected in a government policy document entitled *Women's empowerment and gender equality: a draft policy discussion document for the City of Cape Town* (2004).

The introduction to this document states the following: "It is vitally important that all structures of government...should fully understand... ..freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression... unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of women in our country has radically changed for the better, and that they have been empowered in all spheres of life as equals..." (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998).

However, this document also makes the important proviso that gender equality has not been fully achieved in the country as yet. The document states categorically that, despite considerable progress made regarding the legal status of women, and despite gender equality being entrenched in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996, South African women and men do not enjoy equal rights in practice (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998).

There are numerous factors that contribute to the situation. One of these is the continued dominance of a culture of patriarchy in many regions of the country. As one commentator notes: "Patriarchy is still entrenched amongst all ethnic groups" (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998). There are also concerns about female underrepresentation in the decision-making process and structures (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998). This is a central concern which impacts other aspects of the life of women, especially in impoverished regions. This aspect is a focus of the following sections of this dissertation.

Another pertinent issue which is highlighted above is the importance of violent acts perpetrated against women. These aspects indicate that various fundamental and structural gender inequalities remain firmly embedded in South African society. Unequal gender relations within the ambits of race, class, disability, religion and geographic location further complicate these disadvantages (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998).

What is stressed in this document is the importance of policy making at governmental as well as local government level towards the furtherance of gender equality. It is worth stressing this aspect at this point in the dissertation as the significance of this factor will be embroidered on in subsequent chapters. Local government is the sphere of government that is closest to communities. The services that are provided by municipalities to communities can make a significant change in not only the condition, but also the position of women and men, as well as play a dynamic role in redressing past racial and gender imbalances in communities. (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998).

In order to achieve democratic consolidation and a free and fair society, there are certain obstacles and problems that have been inherited from the past that must be taken cognisance of. As one study on this aspect notes: "South Africa is faced with many challenges. To achieve a society free of racism and sexism the country must undergo a paradigm shift with regards to how resources are allocated and how people relate to each other" (Kornegay, 2001).

Among these problems is the issue of gender relations and the status and empowerment of women in the country. As the Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, Lulu Xingwana, stated recently, "women continue to be marginalised and discriminated against in terms of economic opportunities, the labour market as well as access to land, credit and finance," (Women are suffering, says Lulu Xingwana, 2012).

Gender relations are seen by many commentators as being a key issue in the development of a truly democratic country. Aligned with this concern are concomitant factors such as poverty, which exacerbate the already tenuous and precarious existence of many women in peri-urban and rural areas (Kornegay, 2001). As a policy report by Kornegay states,

The systematic and socially-engineered location of women in rural areas, and the underdevelopment of infrastructure in these areas, has been directly responsible for the poor conditions under which the majority of South Africa's rural communities live. Apartheid laws, coupled with repressive customs and traditions, disempowered women in ways that will take generations to reverse. While the democratic government has established enabling legislation, it must move towards delivery to alleviate and, eventually, eradicate poverty.

(Kornegay, 2001).

There are many other issues that can be brought to bear in terms of an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the situation of women in South Africa and which consequently need to be taken into account in the development of an adequate and constructive policy. For example, the issue of globalisation impacts the situation of

women and also emphasises the rationale that women in Africa should be understood in terms of a broad and intersecting range of factors. As Nelly P. Stromquist comments: "...Intersectoral analysis becomes crucial in these times of globalisation for it enables us to see under what conditions the exclusion of women is deepened" (Stromquist, 2004: 8). The impact of globalisation on women in South Africa and Africa in general is stressed in a study entitled *The challenge of globalisation in Africa: The trade union response* (2001/2). This study notes that:

...many of the ill-effects of globalisation have already hit that continent, where most of its 780 million people, or more than 10 per cent of the world's population, are afflicted by poverty, inequality, exclusion, discrimination, war and disease, as well as bad weather and climate change. (The challenge of globalisation in Africa: The trade union response, p.v)

Furthermore, empowering women to deal with their needs is complicated by their access to power in what is still a largely patriarchal culture. However, this is at the centre of policy changes and is aligned with the implementation of laws aimed at increased women's rights, such as the recently proposed Gender Equality Bill, which will be discussed below.

Another factor to take into consideration is that, as stated by Tendai Motsi "households are becoming more dependent on female income, a development which has increased the status of women and providing the potential for greater female independence and empowerment. At the same time, however, much of the work available to women is poorly remunerated, demeaning, and/or insecure. Flexible contract work is characterised by vulnerability and insecurity. These women do not enjoy the protection of trade unions and may therefore be unfairly dismissed or abused in several ways, with no authority to turn to for help. Workers are subject to the risk of unemployment, ill health, injuries or death from accidents, disability, longevity risk, ignorance of entitlements, homelessness and poor housing conditions" ([http://www.consultancyafrica.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=420&Itemid=206](http://www.consultancyafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=420&Itemid=206)).

Other important factors to consider in ascertaining the situation of South African women are issues such as healthcare and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS is of particular concern as "...it affects women disproportionately to men. The power imbalances between women and men in interpersonal relations contribute to this growing pandemic" (Kornegay, 2001). There is also the issue of violence against women that has to be considered in any policy initiative. An equally relevant concern is the importance of basic needs such as education, housing, welfare, fuel and water" (Kornegay, 2001). Access to employment and the economic empowerment of women are, of course, crucial issues that should feature highly in any comprehensive policy initiative. This is due to the fact that

...women constitute the poorest group in the country and are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed. The challenge is to ensure that the department's macro-economic strategy promotes economic growth and sufficiently addresses the differential impact of macro-economic policy on various groups of people depending on class, race, age, gender, location and disability.

(Minister Gwendoline Lindiwe Mahlangu-Nkabinde: Department of Public Works RSA, 2011)

Therefore, government policy is focused on certain cardinal issues that can be summarised as follows:

- **Access to basic resources.** While these have improved since 1994, "...women's control over these resources is still not satisfactory. The lack of infrastructure in the rural areas still acts as a barrier for women to gain easy access to basic resources" (Kornegay, 2001).
- **Access to employment.** "Whilst theoretically women currently have access to a broader scope of position in the labour market, these new opportunities are accessible to a narrow pool of women who have had access to skills development, education and training (Kornegay, 2001). In general, employment for women is still largely limited to traditional female occupations such as jobs as casual and domestic workers.

- **Economic empowerment.** Women are still the poorest group in the country (Kornegay, 2001). The challenge is to ensure that South Africa's macroeconomic strategy promotes "...economic growth and sufficiently addresses the differential impact of macroeconomic policy on various groups of people depending on class, race, age, gender, location and disability" (Kornegay, 2001).

These issues and others have been inscribed into the drawing up of the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, which is at an advanced stage and which was tabled in parliament during the 2012/13 financial year. However, the Constitution of the country acts as the basis for governmental policy. Under the Bill of Rights of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) there is "...equality of all persons and ...non-sexism and non-racism ... enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa..." (Kornegay, 2001).

An important policy document entitled *National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality: Parliament's Gender Conference* emerged as the result of a "...synthesis of consultations before the Office on the Status of Women was formed in 1997, as well as a June 1998 consultation of a cross-section from NGOs, academia and political parties" (National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality: Parliament's Gender Conference). This policy document is seen as integrative and generic in terms of establishing a framework for gender equality in the country and also emphasises a "decentralised" approach as well as a "basic needs" approach. In other words, "...empowerment is not an end in itself but a means to an end, that of equal rights for women in all spheres of society" (National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality: Parliament's Gender Conference). Kornegay (2001) describes the goals and aims of governmental policy as follows:

South Africa's definition of and goals towards achieving gender equality, are guided by a vision of human rights which incorporates acceptance of equal and inalienable rights of all women and men. This ideal is a fundamental tenet under the Bill of Rights of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996). It emerged from a long period of struggle for a democratic society that respects

and promotes the rights of all its citizens, irrespective of race, gender, class, age, disability, etc. (Kornegay, 2001)

In this light the Gender Policy Framework

...establishes guidelines for South Africa as a nation to take action to remedy the historical legacy by defining new terms of reference for interacting with each other in both the private and public spheres, and by proposing and recommending an institutional framework that facilitates equal access to goods and services for both women and men. (Kornegay, 2001)

Furthermore, the focus of this policy framework is to place gender issues at the forefront of concern and not, as has often been the case in the past, something that can be side-lined in terms of governmental policy concerns. Among the basic assumptions on which this policy is built, are the following: due to the fact that the majority of people living in poverty in the country are women who live in peri-urban and rural areas, the framework has prioritised the meeting of "basic needs" (Kornegay, 2001). This refers to a more holistic and inclusive view of women's rights. In other words, women's rights are not seen only in terms of political rights and demands but also in terms of a variety of other concerns. Furthermore, this policy document also makes the important point that:

...there is an understanding that women are not a homogenous group. This principle must inform all policies and programmes that will lead to the implementation of gender equality. Distinctions according to race, class, sexuality, disability, age and other variables should not to be overlooked or taken for granted. However, similarities should also be used to strengthen initiatives designed to reverse past gender discrimination (Kornegay, 2001).

The document also goes on to assert that affirmative action programmes, as well as economic empowerment for women, should be promoted. It is also emphasised that, while enabling legislation has already been passed by Parliament and other



legislative bodies, "where the need arises, additional legislation is to be developed to make it possible for women's empowerment and gender equality to be attained..." (Kornegay, 2001). Emphasis is also placed on the integration of policy directives at different levels, which includes "effective collaborative strategies to enhance relationships between formal political structures such as the Cabinet, Ministries, Government Departments, the Commission for Gender Equality, the Office of the Status of Women, the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women and other Portfolio Committees, which need to be developed" (Kornegay, 2001).

The Commission for Gender equality or CGE is an independent statutory body established in terms of Section 187 of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. The CGE focuses on the promotion of respect for gender equality as well as "...the protection, development and attainment of gender equality, and to make recommendations to any legislation affecting the status of women" (Maitse, 2012). Furthermore, the South African government is signatory to a number of significant international gender protocols. These include the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Kopanong Declaration (2006). The Beijing Platform for Action recommends that "...national machinery be established by UN member states to design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilise support for policies that promote the advancement of women" (Maitse, 2012). This includes an emphasis on the substantive equality for women and men in social, political, cultural and economic life.

The Kopanong Declaration envisaged that the Sixteen Day campaign on gender violence would "...become a platform both to heighten awareness and take stock of gaps and achievements, to ensure sustained, measurable efforts to end gender violence. (365 day action plan to end gender-based violence, 2007). It should be noted that a number of policy initiatives have emerged in South Africa to uphold the principle of gender equality. These include the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000 (Women in South Africa still seek equality).

## 2.3 POLICIES AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL.

As one paper on the issue of governmental policy and gender issues states, it is Local Government's moral and legal responsibility to engage in a gender equality approach in all its policies, programmes and projects in order to ensure fairness in the treatment of women and men. Given ingrained disparities, equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy for gender equality.

The above succinctly summarises the responsibilities of local government, which is to ensure that gender policies are implemented and to ensure that measures are developed at a local level to "...identify and remove the underlying causes of discrimination in policies, laws, procedures, beliefs, practices and attitudes that maintain gender inequality" (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998). This can only be achieved from a multi-dimensional approach that focuses on both internal and external aspects that impact the lives of women (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998).

It is also felt that the ambit of responsibilities of local government includes the delivery of basic needs, including local economic development, environmental protection, electricity, health, housing, library services, licensing, parks and recreation, planning, produce markets, roads, sewage, traffic, transport and water and that if these responsibilities are not met, it will impact negatively on the situation and status of women.

In essence, the functions of local government refer to the implementation of the framework of gender policy discussed above: to ensure that gender policies are carried out and providing insight and feedback in terms of the local situation of women. As one study notes: "It is the experience of many countries that national machinery alone cannot shift public policy agendas for women without the participation of organisations of civil society" (Kornegay, 2001). In essence, this means that local government should provide the structure and facilities for a close relationship with various organisations in the society – an essential aspect that will be more fully discussed in the next section of this chapter. This interaction between policy and grassroots implementation can be achieved in a number of ways.

The following are some established guidelines.

- All government structures should provide information on their functions and on the policies, programmes and laws in their departments which affect women.
- Government structures should endeavour to carry out awareness-raising on the issues of gender and to provide education or training, where appropriate. For example, the health department should educate the public about women's health.
- Research, technical assistance, monitoring, advocacy and awareness-raising by organisations in civil society should play an important role in the effective development and implementation of the national gender policy.

(Kornegay, 2001).

The importance of local government and the role it plays in the transmission and enforcement of government gender policy is emphasised by the fact that local government is the "...sphere of government closest to the people, and the one that impacts most on women's lives. It is best placed to analyse and respond to the needs of different women" (Kornegay, 2001). However, the report entitled *South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality* states that, "to date, local government has lacked a coherent approach and the necessary tools to advance gender equality and not much attention has been given to this issue in discussions on national machinery" (Kornegay, 2001). At a local level a number of provinces have established gender structures within their provincial governments and legislatures. Some have also "...established, or are establishing, independent bodies to play a role in women's empowerment" (Kornegay, 2001).

An example of the way that local government policies are implemented at a practical level is the Cape Town women empowerment and gender equality policy. This policy is linked to, and aligns itself with, the Equality Clause, as set out in Chapter Two of the South African Constitution, and to the National Gender Policy Framework, as adopted by Parliament in 2000 (External City of Cape Town Women Empowerment and Gender Equality policy). It also aims to ...align the practices and function of the City of Cape Town to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all

Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), signed by the South African Government in 1993, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action. (External City of Cape Town Women empowerment and Gender Equality policy).

Also of importance is the 2002 Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP) of Cape Town. This is seen as a part of a more extensive international effort to secure female representation at all levels of government. It is also a reminder of the fact that "Currently in South Africa, females comprise 52 per cent of the nation's population, but their presence in local, regional and national government posts ranges from 20 per cent to almost 40 per cent" (Women in South Africa still seek equality )

The representation of women in local government has been on the increase in recent years. However, as one commentator notes, "...South African women share several concerns that they think have not been addressed adequately by the government. These include domestic violence, sexual offences, HIV/AIDS, poverty, child support matters and low education levels among black women" (Women in South Africa still seek equality)A good example of this is the fact that many women are unaware of the fact that there is a national program to provide early cervical cancer screenings for women with HIV/AIDS (Women in South Africa still seek equality).

## **2.4 POLICY AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL**

An article by Sharon Davis entitled Putting women back on the agenda (2012) states the following:

Despite a government focus on gender equality and a new national policy to boost the empowerment of women, it appears gender equality in South Africa has taken a step or two back over the past couple of years. South Africa has dropped from sixth place in 2009 to 14th place in 2011 (behind Lesotho in ninth place) in the Global Gender Gap Index, produced annually by the World Economic Forum. South Africa currently ranks 58th for equality in economic participation and opportunity, 86th for equality in educational attainment, 102nd for

equality in health and survival, and 9th for equality in political empowerment, out of 135 countries.

(Davis, 2012)

This above extract implies that although women's rights are enshrined in the Constitution, promoted in the Employment Equity Act and Domestic Violence Act, in the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, as well as the National Policy for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, "...women still face an uneven playing field when competing against their male counterparts" (Davis, 2012). This strongly suggests that women's issues should be addressed in terms of policy and actions at a grassroots level in order for effective change to take place.

One should also bear in mind that the movement in this country that addressed gender issues originated at the grassroots level. In the 1990s, women came together to form the Women's National Coalition (WNC), which went on to draw up the Women's Charter of Effective Equality. This Charter was based on the needs and demands of women at the grassroots level in conjunction with various women's organisations. The central aim of this charter was to "...ensure that women's issues were addressed in the drawing up of the Constitution of post-apartheid South Africa" (Kgasi, 2004).

In other words, there is a tradition of intersection and interaction between grassroots organisations and local government. There are a number of organisations that should be noted with regards to gender policy at both a local or grassroots level. The Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women has the important function of monitoring and evaluating progress in the improvement in the quality of life and status of women in South Africa, with specific reference to the government's commitments (Parliamentary bodies dealing with gender equality: Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women, 1996). This is linked to the Beijing Platform for Action and to the

"...implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination against Women; and to any other applicable

international instruments, and make recommendations to both or either of the houses, or any joint or house committee, on any matter arising..." (Parliamentary bodies dealing with gender equality: Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women, 1996)

A recent report from this committee illustrates the intersection between policy development and the reality for women at the grassroots level. In 2002, the committee stated its intention as being "...to audit the experiences of civil society with respect to how women have experienced participation in the legislative processes " and "audit the obstacles which impede the participation of women", as well as to "elicit information on how the participation of women can be improved" (Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women, 1996).

Furthermore, the committee is also concerned with issues that affect women at the grassroots level and with the way in which the Domestic Violence Act is implemented. The committee also deals with the gathering and collation of data and information on the implementation of the Maintenance Act as well as dealing with issues relating to inheritance and succession. To illustrate the value of this committee in reflecting the reality of women on the ground, the committee found in its 2002 report that the Domestic Violence Act was not being fully implemented. The report refers to findings that there were inadequate resources being allocated to the implementation of the Act and that sexual abuse was often not seen as abuse. (Parliamentary bodies dealing with gender equality: Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women, 1996).

This led to the recommendation of workshops for public education about the issue of domestic violence. These workshops increased women's understanding of the Act and how it could help their situation. Other workshops intended to assist women at a grassroots level included workshops held in Mpumalanga, North-West, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal. These workshops were designed to create an understanding amongst rural women about Parliament and the law-making process. (Parliamentary bodies dealing with gender equality: Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of

Quality of Life and Status of Women, 1996). The above is a good example of how an understanding of gender policy can be implemented at a grassroots level. As an article entitled *At the eye of the storm: South African women in governance* (2012) emphasises,

There is need to create synergy between top level policy-makers and the grassroots level through coordination between parliamentarians and local councillors who work with people on the ground. Feedback loop mechanisms from the local levels to parliamentarians and ministries will ensure an evidence-based approach to development that is inclusive for both men and women. It is therefore important to improve existing monitoring and evaluation systems of local level and provincial level governance in order to capacitate women leaders for an effective contribution to the national development agenda (Dube, 2012).

One should also take into account a number of important variables that affect women at the grassroots level. These include factors such as climate change, gender based violence, inequality and unemployment. In terms of policy making it is therefore necessary for local and national government initiatives to be complemented "...with community platforms of dialogue where women can actively participate" (Dube, 2012). The reason or rationale for an emphasis on grassroots solutions which intersect with and influence local and national policy, is based on the view that women at grassroots level have immediate and first-hand experience of "what works and what does not work in their communities" (The Huairou Commission calls for sustained investments in women's organisations to accelerate progress and realisation of the millennium development goals (MDGS) by 2015).

The contribution of women leaders in the community is seen as essential to the process of gender policy development as they have a "...strong track record for community problem solving by being information creators, problem solvers and knowledge holders" (The Huairou Commission calls for sustained investments in women's organisations..., 2015). Furthermore, "grassroots women have valuable skills, goals and social networks that can be tapped in the planning, implementation and monitoring of quality and accessible basic services and infrastructure at the local

level" (The Huairou Commission calls for sustained investments in women's organisations..., 2015). Women at this level of society and community have also been credited with reducing the amount of corruption that could be a problem at local or national levels as they tend to increase the degree of accountability when they are included in policy making and implementation.

There are a number of grassroots organisations and bodies that function to maintain a balance between policy and its implementation and are also important in terms of rectifying, upgrading and adjusting present policies at both local and governmental levels. One could mention in this regard the Gender and Energy Network of South Africa (GENSA). The goals of this network are to mobilise and work with people from grassroots organisations such as NGOs, governments departments, private companies and all energy service providers, to enhance gender mainstreaming in all the energy projects and programmes in South Africa (Gender and Energy Network of South Africa (GENSA) Network Goals). This organisation is at present working on a number of grassroots projects including work on "...mobilising low-income communities through research and implementation of local energy services to raise awareness in energy safety" (Gender and Energy Network of South Africa (GENSA) Network Goals).

The Rural Women's Movement (RWM) is described as a land-rights grassroots women's organisation based in KwaZulu Natal. This organisation is a good example of work that involves indigenous, rural, farm dwellers and landless women whose communities were forcibly evicted from their ancestral land as a result of the 1913 Land Act (Magubane, 1994). The importance of grassroots organisations like the Rural Women's Movement is emphasized by the following comment

More than 30 per cent of households in this province are headed by women, and women-headed households, who, in terms of poverty, are worse off compared to households headed by men. Their access to arable land, on which to live and grow food, is severely limited and this contributes significantly to women and children's increasing poverty in South Africa (Magubane, 1994).



The Rural Women's Movement main strategy also involves the youth and educating them about sexually transmitted diseases and the impact of HIV/AIDS.

There are many other grassroots organisations that play an invaluable role in the promotion of women's rights and in helping women in the country to enjoy a better quality of life. CAFDA is an organisation specific to the Cape Flats which is mainly involved in community development and upliftment and which includes the important issue of gender equality. The mission statement of this organisation reads as follows:

CAFDA is committed to the Social and Economic Development of disadvantaged Communities on the Cape Flats. The ultimate goal of establishing stable family and community life through participatory empowerment projects for all inhabitants, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, religion and ability, working towards an equitable and just society (CAFDA Mission).

The Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation aimed at "...building the capacity of organisations and individuals engaged in development and social transformation" (Web Directory of Various Non-Profit and Civil Society Organisations in the Western Cape). An important programme is The Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP), which is an independent, non-governmental advocacy and lobbying organisation based in Cape Town. It is significant that this organisation began as a grassroots initiative. The Programme is involved in "...bridging the gap between women in civil society and structures of governance and to increase the participation of women in policy formulation and decision-making". They conduct research and training in order to facilitate, mobilise, link and empower women to lobby for equity between men and women in all spheres of South African society (Gender Advocacy Programme GAP).

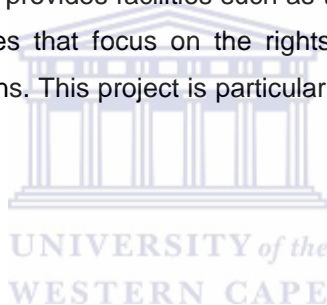
There are many other organisations and bodies that provide support, education and information services that are essential for women at grassroots level. One could mention in this regard the Community Law Centre. The centre has been developed to "...protect and promote the human rights and democratic norms that have been enshrined in the 1996 Constitution and in international human rights instruments"

(Web Directory of Various Non-Profit and Civil Society Organisations in the Western Cape). The Community Law Centre also has a separate gender project which aims to

- translate constitutional rights into progressive legislation and policies;
- develop training and monitoring programmes to support the implementation of these laws and policies;
- ensure that women and men are aware of their rights in terms of the Constitution and legislation and how to exercise these rights.

(Community Law Centre: Gender Project)

Furthermore, the centre also maintains a Documentation Centre with material on gender equality and women's rights. The Constitution and Bill of Rights Educational Project should also be mentioned as it provides facilities such as training workshops and community education programmes that focus on the rights enshrined in the South African Constitution for all citizens. This project is particularly focused on rural communities throughout the country.



## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

The above discussion focused on gender related policy at national, local and grassroots levels. The emphasis has been on how these gender policies evolve from, and is intricately related to, democratic principles and values, and furthermore how gender equality and the situation of women are linked to the fundamental principles of democratic society. At the same time emphasis has been placed on the way that the grassroots organisations are extremely important in the process of informing and changing policy as they represent the lived experiences and existential situation of women at a foundational level. What has also been highlighted is that gender policy with regard to the rights of women should be seen inclusively and that issues such as basic needs and economic empowerment, as well as issues such as domestic violence, should also be taken into account. The rights of women should be seen as an integral and essential component of the overall ethos and balanced functioning of a democracy.

However, it was noted in the above discussion that there is a prevalent view that gender equality is an aspect of our young democracy that has not yet been fully developed and that there are issues and variables that are in need of attention before gender equality can be established at all levels of society. A number of reports, for example the 2012 African Progress report, state that, "...inequality remains a major stumbling block for the growth of Africa, and South Africa is no exception. The inequality that hinders growth includes gender equality, which I firmly believe should be amongst the priorities of the national agenda for development" (Dube, 2012).

Furthermore, policy development plays an essential role in the reduction of gender inequalities that still exist in our society, as Dube (2012) states:

The vehicles that are tasked to ensure women's emancipation, such as the Commission for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Women, have a huge lobbying and engagement role to play in order to gain the support of other government ministries and development agencies to fight against gender inequality. These bodies require political will and commitment from other entities to reduce the gender inequality gap and meet the 2015 targets (Dube, 2012).

The fact that many still struggle for equity in the democratic South Africa points to the need for a more integrated and assertive approach to the issue of gender equality in the country.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The central methodology used in this research was the qualitative interview and fieldwork method, as well as a desk study of the literature on women's empowerment and leadership. This means that individual leadership profiles were researched and these were combined with more general and broader views and studies. The emphasis was however on the more holistic and inclusive methodology, as this was more appropriate to deal with the two central problem areas, namely the general situation with regard to women in leadership in Site B in Khayelitsha and the reasons why feminine leadership qualities are obstructed or advanced.

The general methodology is discursive and a comparative analysis of the available data, interviews, studies and reports on this topic. In other words, the methodology took a qualitative approach and attempt to analyse, synthesize and assess the various points of view in order to find areas of intersection and congruency that provided insight into the central thesis of the dissertation. This methodology therefore included intensive and in-depth interviews that loosely conform to a set of themes and questions pertaining to the main themes of this study, namely:

- Gender equality.
- Gender equity.
- Representation of women in government and how are they incapacitated (undermined?).
- Do women try and help other women?
- How do they define themselves: are they women leaders or are they women who are leaders?
- What steps do women at grassroots level take to empower themselves?

In terms of methodology, various sources were consulted that provided insight into the qualitative interviewing process. Researchers have found that, in many instances using the quantitative method in investigating subject areas or demographics where there were a large number of interlinked and interdependent variables, was

inadequate for dealing with the wide range of nuances and complexities of subjective views and analysis. Therefore, qualitative research methods were developed to deal with research in all fields, particularly in the social sciences and with regard to cultural and subjective data (Myers, 1997). Examples of this type of research include case study research and ethnography (Hough & McKee, 2007: 377). In this way the research provided a more holistic and subject-orientated overview of the subject matter by using the qualitative method.

Other sources that proved to be useful in this regard were *Subjectivism: Toward a Constructivist Methodology* by Vincent Pouliot (2007). In this study the author relates the issue of so-called subjectivist methodologies to a preference for qualitative research methods and the constructivist rationale in research theory. The main argument is that "...constructivist inquiries need to develop not only objectified (or experience-distant) but also subjective (experience-near) knowledge about social and international life" (Pouliot, 2007: 359). This also refers to the view put forward by Glazier (2000) that "there is a growing tendency ...to favour more qualitative research methods. Many ...favour the qualitative approach, which relies more on reports and subjective impression and comments" (Glazer, 2000: 3). This approach in terms of the aims and objectives of this thesis were also justified by Myers, who states that;

The motivation for doing qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, comes from the observation that, if there is one thing which distinguishes humans from the natural world, it is our ability to talk! Qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live (Myers, 1997).

The emphasis placed on understanding people "...and the social and cultural contexts within which they live..." was felt to be appropriate to the topic and subject matter of this thesis.

The central intention was to develop an insight into the various issues pertaining to female leadership and the advancement of women through discursive and intensive

interviews with women leaders, as well as women involved in various community organizations and upliftment programs.

In this thesis on women and women leaders in the B-Section in Khayelitsha the methodology is qualitative. This methodology therefore included intensive and in-depth interviews. The format was open ended questions in focus groups. A total of 25 women were interviewed. Twelve were considered to be women leaders in the community while thirteen women were community members.

The table details the women that were interviewed, their political affiliation and their role in the community. The interviews were carried out in four groups that took place on different days. The first group of women interviewed consisted of community members and the group comprised six women from B-Section in Khayelitsha. The atmosphere was initially tense as the women were tired, returning from work, and they were in a rush to finish up so that they could get home to cook and attend to their households responsibilities. Two of the women that had confirmed to be part of the focus group consequently cancelled due to other commitments.

The second group I interviewed two weeks after the first group, comprised of seven women community members. Of the seven women, only two were employed, one was off sick and the other had a day off. The atmosphere in this interview was initially very jovial. Only one person out of the seven was concerned regarding the length of the interview. The rest chatted amongst themselves comfortably before we started.

The third group consisted of six women community leaders. The environment initially was casual. However, through sensitive observation one could sense the underlying element of defensiveness, even in the way some of the women answered the questions. They were defensive and snappy with their responses and this was the general behaviour of all six interviewees when the discussion was about politics.

The final interview of women leaders consisted of six women. During the introductions the first ones to introduce themselves mentioned their name, surname and their political party. This immediately created a mood of friction as four of the six were from the ANC while two were from the DA. There were a lot of political

references and aspersions thrown at each other, and I had to manage the situation while controlling it as best as possible.

### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED IN STUDY:

Interviewee	Age	Political Party	Role
Interviewee: 1	36	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 2	45	IFP	community members
Interviewee: 3	?	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 4	27	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 5	33	?	community members
Interviewee: 6	48	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 7	39	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 8	35	COPE	community members
Interviewee: 9	42	DA	community members
Interviewee: 10	?	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 11	47	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 12	26	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 13	56	ANC	community members
Interviewee: 14	65	DA	women leaders
Interviewee: 15	49	DA	women leaders
Interviewee: 16	36	DA	women leaders
Interviewee: 17	31	COPE	women leaders
Interviewee: 18	37	DA	women leaders
Interviewee: 19	?	DA	women leaders
Interviewee: 20	62	ANC	women leaders
Interviewee: 21	42	DA	women leaders
Interviewee: 22	39	DA	women leaders
Interviewee: 23	?	IFP	women leaders
Interviewee: 24	?	ANC	women leaders
Interviewee: 25	49	ANC	women leaders

### 3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study refer to the obvious ones found in a broad-based, discursive and comparative analysis of the available literature. The amount of data and divergent views and critiques on this issue is extensive; this means that a few selected variables have to be isolated in order to present a coherent discussion and analysis.

In other words, the central limitation is that not all relevant criteria should be included, which would have meant the inclusion of political, economic and many other variables. However, the central focus of the study was on the most relevant criteria that has impacted on an assessment of female leadership, female marginalization and female leadership, as well as their qualities and advantages, and included all possible concomitant aspects related to these themes.

A second limitation is obviously the fact that this study is limited to a specific geographical area, which reduces the extrapolation of findings and the ability to make wide-ranging generalizations.





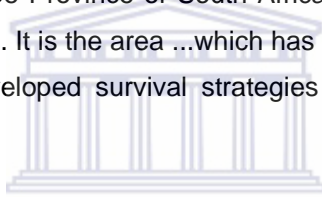
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## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF THEMES AND OUTCOMES

The research question refers to women leaders in Khayelitsha (B-Section) and the obstacles they face in their attempt to empower other women against gender prejudice in their struggle to uplift the community.

Khayelitsha, which means 'new home', was created in 1983 as an area to accommodate overcrowding from Crossroads, Nyanga, Langa and Gugulethu which are local townships in Cape Town (Khayelitsha Services Directory). This area is now home to more than 1 million people. An apt description of the area is as follows:

Khayelitsha is a historically black township situated on the fringes of Cape Town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. It is made up of different types of dwellings. It is the area ...which has a number of experiences where people developed survival strategies of living in poverty. (Ndingaye, 2009)



While it is true that poverty affects both genders, it is also the case that women are often more affected due to gender role divisions in the society, with the responsibility for household welfare falling mainly on the women (Zulu, 1998: 150). This is also related to the fact that in South Africa many homes are run and headed by women alone. Zulu (1998) estimates that at least thirty-five per cent of South African households are run by single women. Furthermore, "in the metropolitan, areas the majority of women live in shacks, without water, proper sanitation or schools for their children, let alone jobs. More than one-half of the unemployed are women" (Zulu, 1998: 148).

Another extremely serious form of oppression encountered by women in an area like Khayelitsha (B-Section) is the continual threat of violence. This refers particularly to the extremely high incidence of rape and battery that is perpetrated against women in this area and many other regions of the country.

The statistics in South Africa are alarming: "According to monitoring groups, a woman is raped every minute. It is projected that one out of every two will be raped in her lifetime" (Zulu, 1998: 150). Rape cases of young girls and even young children have also escalated dramatically in recent years. For example, the Simelela Rape Survivors Centre in Cape Town reported that almost half of the rapes in Cape Town's Khayelitsha township "...involved girls under fourteen, with the youngest survivor aged one... From August 2005 to July 2006 the Centre treated 743 rape cases, an average of two to three a day" (Report on rape in Khayelitsha, 2006).

Sexual harassment in other forms is also reported in the workplace, as well as other manifestations of female oppression such as enforced prostitution. The consequences of these forms of oppression have a direct bearing on female leadership and the ability of women to create an environment for their development and advancement. Zulu elucidates on this important area of concern as follows:

"Many women report being unable to participate in economic and empowerment projects because of being threatened by their partners. They live in constant fear of physical and sexual assaults, although political violence has subsided in most areas of South Africa" (Zulu, 1998: 149).

Zulu (1998) also draws attention to the oppression of women due to being marginalised in terms of the economic decision-making processes in the country. This is clear from the fact that women comprise approximately thirty-six per cent of the work force but only 13 per cent of management (Zulu, 1998: 149). This leads to the view that, "gender-segregated employment is still the main pattern in our economy", which leads to "discrimination in education and training, hiring and pay promotion, inflexible working conditions and lack of access to productive resources..." (Zulu, 1998: 149). Furthermore, "there still exist legal and customary barriers to ownership of, and access to, land, natural resources, capital, credit, technology, and other means of production (Zulu, 1998: 149).

This area also has a very high level of socio-economic problems, which includes the ubiquitous issue of poverty. As one study of this area notes:

Khayelitsha is an area of multiple problems – regardless of the measures used, it has some of the worst social and economic problems in Cape Town and, indeed, in the country as a whole. Housing and health, safety and security, as well as job creation are priority issues for Khayelitsha and are reflected in the lack of formal housing, overcrowding and general dysfunctionality of the area (Khayelitsha Services Directory, ND).

However, a significant factor is that general assessments of these projects and organisation tend to stress the lack of cohesion among them and the narrowness of their objectives (Khayelitsha Services Directory). In essence, studies have found that a wide range of civil society-based organisations confronting poverty issues in the area often deal with problems in an isolated way and do not confront the more holistic and overarching structural and social issues in the area (Khayelitsha Services Directory).

In this thesis we have investigated women and women leaders in the B-Section in Khayelitsha. As mentioned earlier in chapter 3, the methodology took a qualitative approach and attempt to analyse, synthesize and assess the various points of view in order to find areas of intersection and congruency that provided insight into the central thesis of the dissertation. This methodology therefore included intensive and in-depth interviews that loosely conform to a set of themes and questions pertaining to the main themes of this study. The format was open ended questions in focus groups. A total of 25 women were interviewed. Twelve were considered to be women leaders in the community while thirteen women were community members.

#### **4.1 WOMEN IN KHAYELITSHA (SITE-B)**

A typical response from a woman to her daily situation in Khayelitsha, is as follows: Nomsa Bevu, a proportional representative of Sub Council 9 in Khayelitsha states that "...she feels she has to work much harder than her male counterparts to prove herself" (Nieuwoudt, 2008). She also asserts a positive desire to improve her poverty-ridden situation in which she lives. "I make sure that I attend workshops and

training courses so that I can do my job as well as possible" (Nieuwoudt, 2008). These responses are indicative of two basic but central aspects that form a core focus in the present study. Firstly, this refers to the awareness and the perception of being marginalised and not being appreciated because of gender and, secondly, the desire to improve her situation through involvement personally and at a community level.

This interview also reveals other aspects that are important to be aware of in the present study. Nomsa Bevu also states that "women in local government structures have to be extremely vigilant because we are seen as pliable. And when a person is pliable, it means that he or she can be easily corrupted..." (Nieuwoudt, 2008). This shows an awareness of the societal perception of women as being weaker than males. These perceptions add to the understanding of female identity in this area.

There is an erroneous belief that the issue of gender has been dealt with when equity reflects a numerical result. This is an important perspective that again emphasises the significance of the experiential understanding of women in the Khayelitsha area as individuals facing a multitude of different forms of marginalisation and oppression. This study also stresses the viewpoint that, while there may be many obstacles to female unity and community, yet "...once women manage to take on a leading role in their communities as council members, they, for the most part, seem to become strong. They are eager to fill up any gaps through training courses and workshops" (Nieuwoudt, 2008).

Within this environment, community groups with an economic as well as a social agenda are prevalent. It is important in this regard to note that:

There have been a wide range of civil society-based organisations confronting poverty issues in the area. These organisations have been involved in a wide range of both social and economic initiatives, the majority of which have involved high levels of community participation. (Khayelitsha Services Directory)

The above does not paint a very positive picture of the area. This is also an area which presents a number of issues and problems with regard to female upliftment and empowerment. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the unemployment rate is high with only about 35 per cent of the residents of the area being employed (Khayelitsha Services Directory). However, according to other studies the employment rate was estimated at 80 per cent in 1990 (Boyane, 2002: 47). This means that the unemployment rate has increased drastically in the last 25 years. Furthermore, "along with poverty and the lack of facilities comes some of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection, as well as some of the highest crime and murder rates in the world" (Khayelitsha Services Directory). As discussed above, all of these factors contribute to the multiple forms of oppression that affect women.

The living conditions in Khayelitsha should also be considered in relation to the problems that women have to face in the area. Overcrowding and poverty have been linked to high rates of certain diseases in the area, such as diarrhoea and tuberculosis, as well as sexually transmitted diseases. These factors have been associated with increased domestic violence and the abuse of both women and children (Khayelitsha Services Directory). While those living in formal housing have running water and water-borne sewerage, those who live in informal settlements have to make use of communal facilities. To make matters even worse:

The poor sanitation in Khayelitsha is further aggravated by the ground conditions. The soil type is sandy and the water table is high, which limits the type of toilets that are suitable. Furthermore, the area is subjected to a heavy winter rainfall and strong winds, which lead to further transmission of diseases (Khayelitsha Services Directory).

The large numbers of people who live in informal settlements in the area also contribute to poor living conditions. Diarrhoea is the "...second highest cause of death in children under the age of 5 years, and the seventh highest cause of death among people of all ages in Khayelitsha" (Khayelitsha Services Directory).

A different set of questions was asked to the women community members compared to the questions asked to the women community leaders. The women leaders

needed questions directed at their role as leaders, while the women community members needed more relevant questions for their role in the community. Using open-ended questions allowed the women to answer in a frank and fearless manner. They were able to share their thoughts with women that were also leaders, having separate groups also allowed to compare if women leaders and community members had similar problems.

## **4.2 EMERGENT THEMES**

### **4.2.1 Role of women members in their community**

Seven of the interviewees spoke/agreed that the role of women in the community is very instrumental in achieving a united community<sup>1</sup>.

Interviewee 4 discussed the following: "Here in the B-Section in Khayelitsha, when a member of the community passes away, R20 is collected from door to door from the neighbours to ensure that the family of the deceased is supported".

Interviewee 1, in support of the above statement, added that: "...even when a member of the community is in hospital, we, as the women in the community, make plans to go and visit our neighbour in the hospital".

There was a general consensus with this question - the women showed a strong sense of community spirit. They were proud to help their 'neighbours' as a community.

Often in the discussion the women individually mentioned the word 'different', as they further explained I understood it to illustrate that women were different to the men in the community, as men had a different role.

The interview took a significant turn when interviewee 3 mentioned that: "Our husbands play a different role, they are always the majority members voted into the street committees in our community. Women are not really in charge in our community. Men still make the decisions to protect the members of the community".

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<sup>11</sup> To preserve the authenticity of the feedback, interviewee's comments were quoted verbatim.

Interviewee 5 added that: "Women should want the opportunity to be leaders in the community, but what was holding them back was the responsibility they have of taking care of the household and children, which they believe are their main priorities".

Patriarchy was often a key trend in discussing this question. The women mentioned the uneven distribution of work and family responsibility in their community and in their homes. Interviewee 6 stated that: "Women are very strong but, even though they are very busy with children, they were supporting their husbands who are on the committees, so it balances out".

#### **4.2.2 Role of Men**

The study of women leaders and female empowerment in the Khayelitsha area leads to the theoretical stance which views female experience as being the measure of female identity, as opposed to a male-centred orchestration and imposition of female reality. As one commentator notes: "Experience has been an important epistemological stance in opposition to the dominant practices of aligning oneself with and building upon the work of Plato, Kant, Heidegger and other white, male European philosophers" (The Problem of Experience in Feminist Theory).

This is also linked to the view that the female experience is different on a perceptual and emotional level. In this regard we can refer to Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* (1980), which considers that women have been "...fundamentally oppressed by a male-dominated language. If we accept Foucault's argument that what is 'true' depends on who controls discourse, then it is apparent that men's domination of discourse has trapped women inside a male 'truth'..." (An Overview of Feminist Theories). In this theoretical context one could also refer to the liberal feminist view of society and female identity. This stance can be broadly summed up as follows:

Liberal feminism claims that gender differences are not based in biology and therefore that women and men are not all that different: Their common humanity supersedes their procreative differences. If



women and men are not so different, then they should not be treated differently under the law (Liberal Feminism)

The workplace and the working environment is an area where this feminist stance has been utilised. "Thanks to feminist pressure, more and more women have entered fields formerly dominated by men..." (Liberal Feminism). However, the fight for equal gender opportunities is on-going and liberal feminist theory is involved with issues of sexist patterning in employment and gender segregation and stratification that impact on female empowerment in the workplace. This is a relevant perspective in South Africa as well as in Khayelitsha (Site-B). The social and economic situation in Khayelitsha (Site-B), with its extremely high unemployment rates, is of concern for the various disadvantaged groups, especially women. This also refers to the strategy of affirmative action developed to redress the gender and ethnic imbalances in the workplace. "Affirmative action programmes develop a diversified pool of qualified people by encouraging men to train for such jobs as a nurse, elementary school teacher and secretary, and women to go into fields like engineering, construction and police work" (Liberal Feminism).

Questions on the role of men had a number of mixed responses from the women. All of them varied in their responses and took some time to gather their thoughts before giving their unique replies.

Interviewee 8 stated that: "The role of men has changed – initially before 1994 men were the sole breadwinners while women stayed home taking care of the household. Now men drink and are rapists and cannot find work, therefore they are no longer the men we knew".

Interviewee 3 stated that: "...I repeat again that men dominate the street committees but we don't really see what their job is within the street committee. It seems that they are voted into the committee because they are men, not that they will do a better job than women".

Interviewee 2 stated that: 'Men want us to listen to them and that women must not have any opinion".

Interviewee 1 stated that: “We have had a major problem with crime in the B-Section and the men have taken it upon themselves to solve the situation in order to bring change. They have asked the women not to get involved as they believe that the women sympathise too much with the criminal activity of the children. We have therefore left the men to do their job and we have started to feel a little more safer (sic) than before in our community as the criminals are not as active as they were before the men set up the committee to handle the condition of crime. We are supporting the men in all ways possible not to give up on trying to solve the problem”.

The majority of the comments and responses from the women are clear in that Men and Women play unique roles in the B-Section in Khayelitsha and that these unique roles have changed through the years. It was the general consensus that we still live in a patriarchal society which views men as superior to women.

### **4.3 CHALLENGES WOMEN FACE**

#### **4.3.1 Society**

Women face many problems in society, especially in a low income area such as Site-B in Khayelitsha where women are faced with poverty, unemployment and drug abuse to name but a few. I interviewed a few women and this is how they responded to the open ended question.

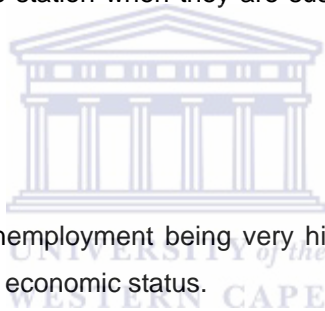
Interviewee 1 stated that: “In our community the main problem we are facing is drug abuse by our children. We are saddened as we don’t know how to solve this situation and it is escalating to the point that our children are stealing our things in our homes to buy these drugs. Where is the government as they are supposed to be helping us with this major crisis?”

Interviewee 3 stated that: “Crime is out of control and we as women are very scared to go outside at night or too early in the morning in case we get robbed or raped.

Sometimes during the night we will hear people crying in our yard but we are too scared to go outside and help them”.

Interviewee 7 stated that: “Alcohol is also a very big problem. Young girls and boys are abusing alcohol and they then are vulnerable to rape. But we are happy because the men in our community have started a committee where they deal with crime. So we do feel a little bit safer”.

The interviewees all agreed that crime, alcohol abuse and drug abuse were the main challenges. Each and every interviewee discussed and mentioned the challenges above. They also mentioned that the men in their community have realised that they have to assist the police in the best way possible by helping them apprehend the criminals and taking them to the police station when they are suspected of criminal activity.



#### **4.3.2 Economic factors**

Times have been tough with youth unemployment being very high, and the youth has turned to crime due to their current economic status.

Interviewee 6 stated that: “Unemployment has been a prevalent part of society. People in our area don’t have jobs and because they are unemployed they are poor and cannot take care of their families accordingly”.

Interviewee 9 added that: “Without jobs we cannot eat, get education or live healthy lives. We beg government to hear our problem and create jobs for our children so that they can have bright futures”.

Interviewee 11 stated that: “My daily problem includes that I can’t even buy bread for my children. We eat bread every day and I can’t buy it. I have to ask my neighbour and family but they are tired of me always asking for favours. If government could give us permanent jobs this would change our lives forever”.

A majority of the interviewees stated that, if the issue of unemployment could be resolved, it could be very advantageous to the community. They believed that it would allow families to eat, furthermore it would allow the community to afford better medical care and that it would create less crime as people would not have to steal in order to feed their families. Finally they stated that they would then be able to prepare better for their children's futures with education plans.

### **4.3.3 Environmental**

When the group was discussing the environmental status in B-Section the women became rather vocal. Living in a township is rather different than a suburban area. There are taverns (some illegal/some legal) drinking spots that are in between the houses most of the time (or ran from someone's house). The music blares all night and people loiter in the streets and the tavern does not close at the legally suggested time.

Interviewee 3 stated that: "There is a lot of noise at night as there is a shebeen close to my house. The shebeen is not legal I know, but people go there and buy alcohol and people there make noise all night and by the time I fall asleep it's too late and I'm late for work".

Another prevalent discussion was the supply of prepaid electricity. This was mentioned repeatedly by the women stating that electricity was not easily attainable at peak times (when people return from work).

Interviewee 8 stated that: "The electricity supply in our area is not dependable and sometimes we wait in lines for long periods of time waiting to buy electricity. Sometimes the spaza (local informal convenience store) shop runs out of airtime and we sleep without electricity".

The interviewees mentioned the noise levels due to the shebeen (drinking hall) in the area as well as a shortage of electricity for the prepaid meters. These were the prevalent environmental problems that they faced.

#### 4.4 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Due to the current economic situation in South Africa, Cape Town and specifically in the B-Section where there is a lack of employment, Government has set up programs such as monthly social grants (financial aid) and has promised low cost housing in order to curb the current state of affairs of financial lack. Unfortunately service delivery (providing adequate low cost housing, water supply and basic sanitation) has been slow, therefore the women were riled up when responding.

Interviewee 5 stated that: "If government can create jobs and support our children with jobs that would be the best thing. If our children are busy with a career they will have less time to do wrong things such as crime and drugs".

Interviewee 3 stated that: "Government promised us houses so that we can live safely. In our area we are lucky as we have houses but our children are adults and they still live with us in backyards in shacks, as they are still on waiting lists".

Interview 3 added that: "We get disability grants and child support grants to support us with our livelihoods. What some of the youth does is use that money for alcohol. So it is sad that some of the money that government supports us with is wasted and not used for the right reasons".

Interviewee 6 stated that: "As a single parent I don't know what I would do if I did not get my daughter's grant. Even though it's not a lot of money it allows me to buy shoes for my child and also that she can take a lunchbox to school. I am very happy for the financial support from government as her father does not support her".

Interviewee 9 stated that: "We appreciate the money that government gives us but I would prefer that government gives our children skills and training to make sure that they can have brighter futures. They could maybe train them in skills that allow them to open their own businesses since they can't create jobs".

Interviewee 10 stated that: “The reduction of payment rates in our home has really helped because we are all unemployed so we are so happy that rates were totally reduced as we had no way to pay them at all. The grants allow us to feed the children; my sick mother also gets her pension and this eases the pressure a lot”.

Interviewee 4 stated that: ‘I think that government made a progress in my life, because there are things that I wanted like RDP house, water and electricity and they even created community jobs and some of the children get free education”.

Interviewee 1 stated that: “Government does not help me in any way. I don’t see what they are doing besides giving grants for children and pensioners”.

Interviewee 2 stated that: “We are still too poor but we hope things will improve”.

Interviewee 8 stated that: “Government gave me a learnership (sic) and that prepared me for the job that I have now”.

The women saw the support of government in two central ways. It was a 60/40 split with the majority stating that they appreciated what government did with all the social grants and the minority stating that they felt government has done nothing to improve their lives.

### **Patriarchy yes or no?**

There is little doubt that women in Africa face what can be termed multiple forms of oppression and marginalisation, which in turn necessitate multivalent feminist strategies. One could begin with an assessment of the patriarchal and male-centred nature of South African society. Zulu (1998) states:

South African society is profoundly patriarchal. Women remain among the most politically, socially and economically marginalised members of our society. They are oppressed through the social structure and institutions. They are underrepresented in all sectors of our society

except its lowest reaches. Civil and political organisations, like the African National Congress (ANC), are still male dominated. The situation is worse in the private sector. Companies resisting democratic change are not prepared to develop and implement gender-sensitive policies (Zulu, 1998: 147).

The above refers to the various ways in which male hegemony in society marginalises women on a social, political as well as economic level. To support this view of gender inequality, Zulu (1998) refers to the fact that out of a total of 531,498 senior officials and managers, 415,505 are male and only 150,998 are women and that "...inequality between women and men permeates the whole social fabric" (Zulu, 1998: 148). Zulu also refers to discrimination in education, with far fewer women finishing school or entering university than men. An important point is that the educational system tends to reinforce gender roles and the self-perception and self-efficacy of women. "Old educational materials still reinforce traditional female and male roles that deny women opportunities for equal partnership in society" (Zulu, 1998: 148). The reinforcement of certain stereotypes which emphasise female "weakness" and inferiority and which lead to low self-esteem and low self-efficacy, have been noted in many studies on education, the media and by women throughout the world.

#### **4.5 SUPPORT TO WOMEN**

Some of the women interviewees in the B-Section complained of a lack of support from their community in general, their committees or police.

Interviewee 2 stated that: "There is no support for women in my community – you just have to wake up and do things yourself".

Interviewee 5 stated that: "We are not sure of any support because the local committees do not consult with us. We hear that money has come in for certain projects but we never see these things get off the ground. Or if the projects begin

certain people are offered the opportunity and not everyone. They choose each other and their families".

Interview 3 stated that: "Some people do not attend street meetings when they are announced, therefore they never know what is going on".

Interviewee 1 stated that: "There are a lot of women within our community that have skills such as baking, bead making and sewing but we don't even have any kind of support such as stipends to buy materials and start to work for ourselves so that we don't bother anyone begging for jobs".

The general consensus was that the women did not see any specific support directed at women in their community. They also explained that there was corruption within the committees because the committee members only helped the people they know and their families. Interviewee 6 went as far as to say that: "...if you are low-class you get nothing but if you are their friend you get everything".

## **4.6 IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF LIFE AFTER 1994**

### **4.6.1 Health**

The women discussed how their quality of life had improved after 1994, and there were particular themes that came out such as that some women were happy and that there was improvement post 1994, new diseases, slow service at clinics and lack of personal cash flow to meet health needs.

Interviewee 11 stated that: "Before we were free from apartheid we used to struggle as we did not have enough clinics to accommodate us. Now in our area there are many places people can go to see a doctor. There is a lot of improvement and we are fine".

Interviewee 9 states that: "We have new challenges now such as HIV/AIDS. We did not have this before – but then I guess it's a new disease".



The interviewees suggested that their health is better now with the amount of medical facilities that they can go to should they not be feeling well. Some complained about slow service at the clinics.

Interviewee 7 stated: "We don't have money. You sometimes have to pay a lot for your child to see the doctor (private practice). I wish I had medical aid to take my children to the doctor when they are sick. At the clinic you have to get there by at least 5am to stand in line and maybe you can see the doctor by 10am. The lines are too long and too many people are sick all the time".

#### **4.6.2 Education**

Recently in South Africa there was a scandal that stated that books were not delivered at all to a particular province, therefore this topic was touched on in the interviews. Understanding the Limpopo textbook saga, <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/review/hsrc-review-september-2013/understanding-the-limpopo-textbook-saga> (Chisholm: 2013), The Textbook Saga and Corruption in Education. Southern African Review of Education (With Education With Production).

Interviewee 6 stated that: "The Bantu education system was crippling for us as we had to study in a language we did not understand. There was a lot of failure but we strived and fought for what we deserved even though many died for the cause (referring to the 1976 Soweto uprising). We have free education now and our children study in their mother tongue – life is definitely much better".

Some of the women stated that with free education in some schools it helps but they are still struggling to pay for school supplies. They are glad their children get to study in their mother tongue. Some of the group members had a different viewpoint.

Interviewee 5 stated: "The scandal with no books being delivered in some areas scared us. We were worried about the report card the children would get with no textbooks. The department seemed as if they did not care as they took long to solve this problem".

Interviewee 3 stated: “The minister should have been fired – she doesn’t care”.

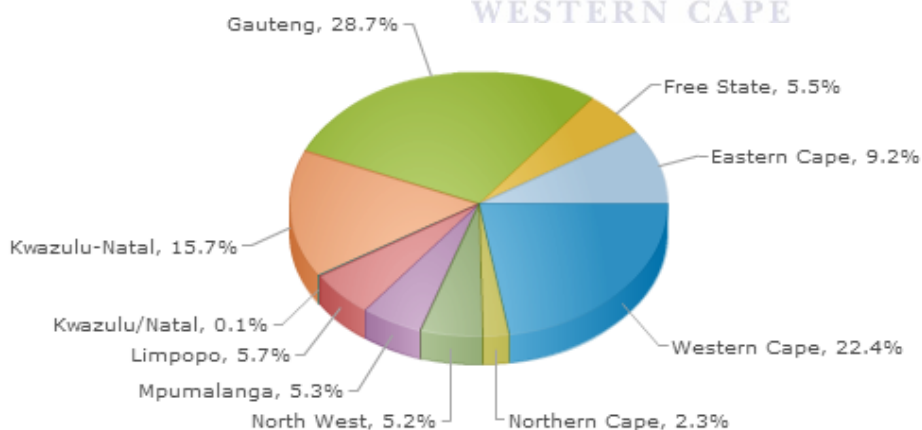
Interviewee 1 stated: “The classes are so crowded that my child does not get the attention she deserves”.

The point of overcrowding and textbooks was mentioned by the women as one of the main challenges that face their children. Teenage pregnancy was also mentioned by the women, blaming the teachers for abusing (sexual) their daughters and ‘destroying’ their lives.

### 4.6.3 Safety and Security

In South Africa the crime rate is at a high in the Western Cape according to Crime Statistics SA. The South African Police Service releases the latest crime statistics annually.

Figure 2: Crime statistics



Source: <http://www.crimestatssa.com/index.php>

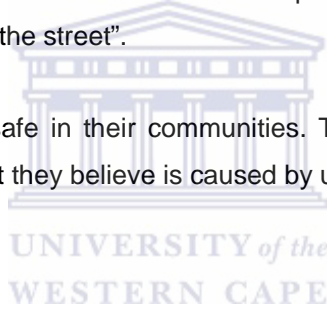
The women of Khayelitsha state that crime has increased severely over the last couple of years, and reflect on how there was less crime before.

Interviewee 5 stated that: “Back in the day communities lived in harmony, as we had a common cause. There was less crime and wrong-doing. Now that the fight is over against the previous oppressor and the youth have nothing to fight for, they have too much time on their hands and they are doing crime due to lack of activity or employment”.

Crime was a key discussion. All the women agreed that crime was destroying their community and the society at large. They stated that they are happy that the men in their community are helping the police to capture all the criminals. Their prevalent fear was rape for them and their daughters

Interviewee 1 concluded stating: “We are not safe. We live in fear of our own sons – they do drugs, and they are dangerous. Government and the police must fix this – these boys need jobs to keep them off the street”.

In summary the women do not feel safe in their communities. The women live in daily fear of their lives due to crime that they believe is caused by unemployment.



## **4.7 WOMEN LEADERS**

The second batch of women that were interviewed was women that were leaders in the B-Section area in Khayelitsha. Some of the women were street committee members, church leaders, political party councillors, KDF representatives and SANCO leaders.

### **4.7.1 Women leadership role**

It was very fascinating chatting to the women leaders and how they defined their role in the community. The main themes that came out were solving community member problems, strategy and working closely with the community.

Interviewee 11: “The role I play as a leader in the community is to understand the problems that people are dealing with. We then write this list down in terms of priority

with the aim to deal with the problems individually and successfully. We then devise how we can deal with the problems and strategize on the possible route we can take in order to ensure that once we speak to the stakeholders such as SANCO, we present not just the problem but also the possible solution”.

Interviewee 13: “We always ensure that we work closely with the community to serve them in the best way possible. It is always difficult but we overcome these difficulties as a committee and as a community”.

Interviewee 15: “Our community is very unique but what we have noticed is that as a society we face the same problems. We as women leaders have the role to be mothers to the motherless, and sisters and friends to members of our community. We put our community first”.

Interviewee 17: “Women are the main drivers of all the goals we have set as a committee, men like to discuss but we as women leaders take the initiative and lead when it comes to implementation”.

The general consensus with the women was that their main role within the committee is to assist/support the community in the best way they possibly can. They take the community challenges to higher structures to ensure that they can be solved.

## **4.8 CHALLENGES AS WOMEN LEADERS**

### **4.8.1 Personal**

When discussing personal challenges the women took time to introspect and really look at their lives. Family was mentioned often as well as fear of criminals.

Interviewee 16 stated that: “We face the same problems that other women in our society face, such as rape, abuse and feeling vulnerable to criminals”.

Interviewee 18 stated that: “Women have the main role of balancing family and having a job while also serving on a community committee. We have to play a role in parenting, feeding our families and ensuring that our families are taken care of”.

Interviewee 20 stated that: “Finances are a major challenge in my life as I am serving on the local street committee and we do not get paid for this role. If we could get even a small salary to motivate us to carry on, that would be great”.

Financial constraints and crime were also very prevalent in the interview with the women leaders. They love serving the community but feel that they sometimes are under a lot of pressure to deliver great results for their community.

#### **4.8.2 Community**

Some of the women felt that the community blames them for slow service delivery yet community members do not attend community meetings.

Interviewee 23: “People tend to blame us, saying that we are useless but the problem is that when meetings are announced community members don’t show up, meaning that they never get the updates that we have”.

The point above was mentioned many times by the women leaders. It came across as a main frustration for the women leaders.

Interviewee 24 stated that: “People swear at us in the street should we take decisions that they don’t agree with. Being a woman and being a leader is very tough because we fear for the safety of our families, and sometimes our husbands try to motivate us to quit”.

Interviewee 25 stated that: “It’s very tough being a women leader in our area because we also fight, as some women leaders belong to different political parties. This can delay progress within the committee as we make the job political yet it’s not. We then decided to sit down with people respected in the community that are elders

to help us resolve the situation. This was successful and we are now doing our jobs efficiently and serving the community in the best way possible".

The interview with the women leaders was very one-dimensional. They feared that they were not making a difference but they were still willing to strive to do so. They also mentioned their fear of safety due to politically influenced community members.

## **4.9 RELATIONSHIPS**

### **4.9.1 Government**

The relationship between the women community leaders and government seems to be not that great. The women mention that reaching goals that require government input takes too long, and they feel government has no urgency.

Interviewee 19 stated that: "Our relationship with government is not that good. We try and get support from women in government as women leaders but we feel that they don't care. They don't respond to our requests, they red tape us with the personal assistants".



Interviewee 13: "Well, sometimes government hears our cry, other times not. We are suffering but government does not hear the urgency. We work with women sometimes in government and they help us but it's not enough and the processes are very slow".

Interviewee 16: "I am a member of the ANC Women's League and I was sad that the ANC lost the province to the DA. But I thought that at least we will be led by women such as Zille and the other one - the Mayor. But what we quickly realised is that when they were expecting our votes, they had time to meet with us, they were accessible but the minute they won, their diaries were too full to meet with the women of Khayelitsha to talk about what the problems are".

Interviewee 19: "It's very tough. The women from government come and we have long meetings then they leave, making lots of promises. Then we never see them ever again - they disappear. We then go back to the community and do a report back

relaying the promises made by the officials, and the community is happy. Thereafter nothing happens and the community say that we are liars. It's tough being a woman and its even much harder being a woman and being a leader”.

It was clear in the interview that the women felt that they do not get adequate support from women in local government in order for them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. They stated that promises are made but delivery takes too long to occur. They also stated that they have tried many strategies to make the officials keep their promises but red tape tends to limit them in all aspects. It was the general consensus that they would not give up, but they do wish they had more support from a women-led provincial government.

#### **4.9.2 Stakeholders**

**There are many stakeholders in Khayelitsha that work with the women leaders in street committees.**

Interviewee 18 stated that: “We work well with the KDF, SANCO and other street committees but we still have a long way to go”.

Interviewee 16 stated that: “We do feel the support from other structures in our larger community and we always consult with them should we need advice”.

Interviewee 15 stated that: “I believe those structures are useless. I can tell you many stories about how they have failed to assist us when we do ask for assistance. But then I guess you can't force people to help you”.

The general outcome was that they have support, but that the women are not certain if that support drastically changes their community issues.

#### **Khayelitsha – Its needs, services and future**

Another issue raised by the above study, which has reference to the present discussion of Khayelitsha (Site-B), is that many women in the area did not even have knowledge of the civic organisations in the area. As McEwan elaborates:

A few are members of housing savings schemes, and through these have acquired formal housing; they tend to be more satisfied with their own involvement in their communities, but still express dissatisfaction with local governance and a lack of consultation over socio-economic development (McEwan, 2003: 15).

In essence, what this study suggests is that there is a fundamental gap in communication between grassroots endeavours and government initiatives. This refers to the issue of the marginalisation of the community in development planning. "With regard to community participation, the majority of respondents either believe that there are no IDP projects in their communities or say that they do not know of any, indicating their marginalisation in community development" (McEwan, 2003: 15). However, on the other hand, the study by McEwan also revealed that most women interviewed were aware of, and participated in, CBOs or community-based organisations. As one interviewee stated: "Yes, women are very much involved here. Women are involved in most things taking place. We can't afford to just wait for things to happen. We are also the most in need" (McEwan, 2003: 15).

Therefore, an important result of the study by McEwan, which must be taken into account in this mini-thesis, is that many women in Khayelitsha (Site-B) felt that they were being marginalised by local government. A large majority of women in all areas state that they either do not know if local government tried to involve women in their activities or state clearly that there have been no attempts to do so. Only five of the respondents know of attempts to involve women in development projects (McEwan, 2003: 15).

This suggests a "...general failure on the part of the local government to inform or educate communities about the possibilities of participation and the importance of this to the successful transformation toward developmental of local government" (McEwan, 2003:16). This is an important conclusion that will be taken into consideration in the practical section of this mini-thesis.



Another important consideration that emerges from the interviews conducted by McEwan (2003) is that almost all of the interviewees expressed the view that women have the ability and capability to improve conditions and living standards in the community. This included the need for community workshops and further training to facilitate and enable this desire to participate in government projects. However, as noted in previous sections of this mini-thesis, women also felt constricted by their household and family duties and stated that workshops and other activities would have to take into account these duties, such as caring for children. Women also expressed the need for more education that would allow them to participate more actively in government projects (McEwan, 2003:17). It is also significant to note that "...interviewees articulate the importance of community involvement in all stages of development projects, from needs assessment to project planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Lack of information is seen by most to be important in restricting their participation" (McEwan, 2003:17).

The view that women face multiple forms of marginalisation and oppression is also supported by McEwan's study. This refers to further constraints experienced by the women of Khayelitsha (Site-B). The following is from McEwan's 2003 study:

The level of socio-economic development within communities clearly has a direct bearing upon women's degree of access to information and, therefore, opportunities for participation. One of the respondents, a 60-year old mother, grandmother and sole breadwinner of the family, explains the (not atypical) constraints on her participation: "Every day I get up at 5am to prepare breakfast for the children and walk to the train station. When I get home from work in the evenings I have to feed my daughter and her children and take care of the house. I just moved into my first house from a shack. I don't have to carry water now, but there is still a lot of work to be done, plastering and so on... My daughter is ill. I don't have time to attend meetings during the week, even in the evenings (McEwan, 2003:17).

The above is quoted at length as it tends to support the views and assertions expressed in previous sections of this mini-thesis, especially with regard to the discussion of multiple oppression experienced by women in the area.

These constraints are, however, exacerbated by a lack of communication and understanding between communities and local government structures. "There is a persistent lack of understanding within communities and local government of the multiple tasks that black women perform and how time consuming they are..." (McEwan, 2003:17). The various ways in which women are marginalised and frustrated in their attempts to improve their situation and that of the community is reiterated by McEwan: "They tend to have less flexibility than men, less leisure time and less time to participate in public events, particularly if they are heads of households, as many women are in Khayelitsha" (McEwan, 2003:18). The results of the interviews conducted by McEwan also stress the lack of knowledge transfer between community and government, which hampers effective leadership and initiative at a grassroots level.

In the light of these interviews it becomes clear that there is a fundamental lack of connection and communication between women's needs, aspirations and problems and local government structures. McEwan makes the following important point that the success of local government transformation depends upon the success of IDP (Integrated Development Planning) measures "...in enabling the structured participation of very large numbers of people" (McEwan, 2003:18). One of the greatest threats to this process is the development of a culture of alienation (McEwan, 2003:18) at a community and grassroots level as a result of poor communication and knowledge sharing, as well as poor leadership integration between local and governmental structures. In this regard McEwan (2003) makes the following important point:

Under apartheid, local government was responsible for implementing policies of segregation, forced removals and the routine destruction of informal settlements. Memories of this persist in Cape Town and it is imperative that cultures of alienation are not allowed to develop through lack of trust and participation and disillusionment within communities. (McEwan, 2003:18).

The above is an aspect that was included in the interviews that were conducted with the women and female leaders of Khayelitsha (Site-B). It should also be noted that in the McEwan study it was found that poor socio-economic development and the exclusion from the decision-making process were two central factors that were mentioned as being problematic by women in Khayelitsha (Site-B). This is evident in one interviewee's response to housing improvements in the area.

New houses are built by the savings schemes - Masithembane and HOSHOP. They are not coming from the government. We don't live close enough to the housing schemes and we don't know where the offices are. We can't save the money so we cannot join the schemes. So how is the government helping us? (McEwan, 2003:19)

Furthermore, there is a certain lack of trust among residents and evidence of doubt about the way that politics determines government policy and sections. "Most women do not believe that local government will deliver outstanding services. Several believe that this non-delivery is related to party politics" (McEwan, 2003:19). In essence, McEwan's study tends to paint a picture of disillusionment amongst women in Khayelitsha with political leadership and local government. This is cogently summed up by the following response;

We are never asked for our opinion on what should be done. If anything happens it comes from the council and we are not asked for the things that we think are important... No, we are not consulted about what we need (McEwan, 2003:20).

It is clear from the above that a disparity exists between community needs and local government. This can be seen in the prevalent dissatisfaction among residents with service delivery as well as "...the non-involvement of community" (McEwan, 2003: 19). This includes a perceived marginalisation of residents from the budget process as well as other important aspects such as housing and water. This perceived exclusion also seems to have a strong gender bias. As one interviewee for the study by McEwan states: "The government thinks women don't understand budgets and so

they don't bother... Listen, every woman here knows about budgets because they deal with them every day” (McEwan, 2003:19). McEwan concludes that:

This indicates a profound failure by the local government to meet community needs in Khayelitsha, to deliver services and to facilitate community participation. Most respondents express disappointment at the failure of local government to involve them more directly and to develop an understanding of what is needed in their areas (McEwan, 2003:20).

The above is a factor that was addressed in the interviews, as is discussed in conclusion of this mini-thesis.



## CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The results from the in-depth interviews showed in many instances a close correlation with the literature on the topic. At the same time, the analysis of the interviews and responses to the questions also indicate additional dimensions of experiential meaning that can be ascribed to the in-depth exploration of the existential situation of women in South African society and the various problems they experience. This was especially true of the B-Section area in Khayelitsha, which was selected for investigation and from which the interviewees were drawn. While this area has issues in terms of life situation and relation to government specific to the region, the suggestion that flows from this study is that these findings could be extrapolated and applied to other regions of the country – which would make an interesting area for further research.

As a prolegomena to the analysis of the interviews, one should bear in mind the basic assumptions and theoretical context of a democracy. To reiterate from chapter two: Hobson lists the central institutional guarantees for a functional democracy. These include: the freedom to form and join organisations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; the right of political leaders to compete for support; alternative sources of information; free and fair elections and institutional mechanisms to ensure that government is dependent on votes and other forms of preference (Hobson, 2003: 57). Within this framework, one has to take into account a complex array of issues, variables, relationships, interconnections and problems that women in this particular area experience and the extent to which the ideal view of democracy must come to terms with the experiential, day-to-day lives of women living in impoverished and under-resourced parts of our country. In other words, the theoretical assumptions and ideals of a true and effective democracy must be applied to the actual living situation and existential realities of women in South Africa and in this region. The central issue of the freedom to express oneself and one's opinions, was a central focus in the interviews and discussions with the female interviewees

A number of general points should also be made at the start of this analysis. Firstly, there was a certain degree of caution and reticence at the initiation of some of the

interview sessions as well as an initial lack of responsiveness or openness from many of the interviewees. This suggests that, in reality, freedom of expression is curtailed to a certain extent by issues such as political affiliation and possibly by perceived gender status in the society. From a theoretical point of view one can draw on many studies on the issue of female identity perception and the construction of female identity in a patriarchal society. For example, one could refer to classic studies such as Peggy Orenstein's *School Girls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap* which is drawn from the American Association of University Women's 1990 study "Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America". This study polled the attitudes of 3,000 young boys and girls and their general attitudes towards their school and society. The book takes into account the very high statistics relating to the drop in self-esteem that occurs among young adolescent girls. The author applies these findings to real-life situations and people and profiles female students in two Californian schools.

Other studies on the marginalisation of women in business are useful as background to the present study, especially work on the phenomenon known as the 'glass ceiling', which refers to the various obstacles that prevent the upward mobility for women in the workplace and the corporate world (Madsen, 2010). In short, a wide range of studies emphasise the central point that:

...discrimination exists in many forms. For women, for example, discrimination can result in lower pay and fewer advances in salary when compared with men. It may also manifest in hiring practices, training and development, and promotional opportunities that are disproportionately in favour of men (Lockwood, 2004).

Therefore, in general, the above tends to run counter to the contention that women do not help women in reality but are equally as divisive as men. It will be suggested that one has to take into account the African cultural and social milieu and the commonality and sense of common purpose that exist among women in this context. There is a view that female identity is shaped by women creating or involving themselves in projects aimed at improving their lives or of those in their community. An example of the way in which women help themselves would be the WHEAT

Women's Fund, which was founded in 1998 by a group of South African feminists to encourage grassroots women's leadership as apartheid ended. This endeavour was aimed at helping and empowering grassroots women who "...mostly do not have sustainable incomes and entry opportunities into the economy which is crucial to their development and that of their children" (WHEAT: Women's fund, 1998). It was also intended to assist women at this level who did not have access to formal funding. There are many other examples. Another would be the National Development Agency (NDA), which is a body that contributes to the eradication of poverty through development funding and capacity building. Importantly, this Agency supports civil as well as governmental development actions.

As noted, central to this exploration of grassroots leadership is the question of female identity within the South African and local context. This refers to political as well as social and cultural identity. This would include various women's groups and income generating projects or IGPs, as well as street committees, community outreach projects and civic organisations. A good example of this would be the Khayelitsha Development Forum, which is run at a community level with funding from the government.

The barriers to female identity are not only political but include socio-cultural obstacles relating to the societal milieu in which they live, as well as the balance between work and family.

Certain ambiguities and differing perspectives on major issues were also found from an analysis of the interviews. On the one hand there was a firm consensus about certain aspects of the situation of women but there were differing views and mixed responses about other aspects of the situation of women in society. This is an important point as those areas and themes are not a firm consensus and need to be analysed and explored in more depth in order to ascertain why different responses and attitudes exist in the community.

The central underlying theoretical stance that was adopted as a background to this study can be summarised in the ideal of a vital civil society as being essential to a dynamic democracy. In essence, this refers to the ability of individuals and civil

organisations to represent the various and diverse interests of society, which means " ...widening access to, and public participation in, public institutions and processes" (Muthien et al., 2000: 2).

It was in this light that the research questions and interviews were directed to a selection of the female community and women leaders of Khayelitsha (B-Section). As noted in the previous chapter, the interviews at times took place in a tense atmosphere and this immediately points to a trenchant variable that should be emphasised as an important part of the results of this study. The women were in a rush to get home to carry out their home duties and appointments – which is indicative of the pressure that women in the area experience and, if we were to extrapolate, that women in other impoverished areas must experience.

Another element that came to the fore in some of the interviews was a certain degree of political tension and even underlying hostility between some of the women who were from different political parties. This is a further variable that should be taken into account when trying to understand the totality of the female experience in this area. This concurs with a number of theoretical perspectives that refer to a holistic rather than a segmented analysis of groups and individuals in society.

Central to the findings from the interviews is the view that the role of women in the community is an essential element that serves to bind and unite the community and facilitates community functioning. A sense of common interest and unity of purpose was evident among the women in the interviews. As one of the interviewees stated: "...even when a member of the community is in hospital we, as the women in the community, make plans to go and visit our neighbour in the hospital".

Access to health services is often very poor. Women lack power over their sexual and reproductive lives. This affects their mental and physical health. Women, especially in rural areas, have to walk very long distances to reach clinics and in the clinics and hospitals they are treated with little respect and are not guaranteed privacy or confidentiality in their health treatment (Zulu, 1998: 148).



Importantly, the awareness of gender difference and female identity was never far from the views and perceptions of the women being interviewed. The issue of a patriarchal society is central to the problems that women experience in this area. As noted in the interviews, the women often mentioned the term 'different'; i.e. that women were different to the men in the community as men had a different role. This awareness leads to the concomitant issue of gender identity and place – which will be expanded on further in this analysis.

In terms of understanding this sense of difference, one should take into account the various contributing social, economic and political factors. Paramount here is the continued dominance of a culture of patriarchy in many regions of the country. As one commentator notes: "Patriarchy is still entrenched amongst all ethnic groups" (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998). This is also linked to the important problem of female underrepresentation in decision-making processes and structures. (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998). Concomitant to this are a number of other factors that emerged from the interviews and which coincide with theoretical feminist analyses, for example the negative significance of violent acts perpetrated against women. These aspects indicate that various fundamental and structural gender inequalities remain firmly embedded in South African society. As Myakayaka-Manzini states, unequal gender relations within the ambits of race, class, disability, religion and geographic location further complicate these disadvantages (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998).

An important concern that impacts the issue of women helping women in the African and South African context is class differences with "...educated and elite women are seen as ideologically far more advanced (and therefore feminist) and rural/ordinary African women are seen as parochial and prefeminist" (Mikell, 1997: 407). This type of differentiation is one of the obstacles to unity and a sense of common purpose among many African women. However, despite this aspect "...collaboration between classes still occurs" (Mikell, 1997 407). One of the aims of this mini-thesis and the focus groups and interviews was to question these views and assumptions. The view put forward by Mikell (1997) is suggested as the more probable outcome of such an investigation. This refers to the view that the larger needs and desires of women for freedom from male hegemony and the ability to determine their own lives overcomes

the possible class differences and different cultural and social stances that may exist. As Mikell (1997) states:

It has been my position that an ideological dichotomy is largely negated by African cultural traditions which legitimate female organisations and collective actions by women in the interest of women, an awareness shared by women at all points along the continuum (Mikell, 1995: 407).

Mikell goes on to assert that this continuum of interest and shared objectives among women is grounded in "...African communal, historical, symbolic and experiential constructs, rather than in cultural constructs based on Western individualism and competition" (Mikell, 1997: 407). This is an important view for a number of reasons. In the first instance it relates to the theoretical trajectory of experiential feminism that focuses on the manner in which culture and social influences determine feminine attitudes in a particular society. Secondly, it tends to be aligned with a more reflexive and deconstructive approach to feminism, which also questions the more Eurocentric and Western modes of feminist discourse. In essence, this means that the cultural and historical situation of African women and women in Khayelitsha (Side B), while related to the universal concerns of female oppression, is unique and should be understood in the context of the wide array of variables and influences that affect these women. This also refers to the view that a more "strategic consensus" is emerging among African women" (Mikell, 1997:407). As has already been suggested, this makes the African situation possibly unique in that African women are faced with multiple forms of discrimination and oppression.

While one view is that there is a strong underlying consensus and community of purpose among African women, a mitigating factor is the prevalent influence of politics. This is an important factor that has to be taken into account in any analysis of the situation of women in South Africa. As Mikell states the following:

...as new subtleties in African women's realities surface, politics are becoming the central point around which a new feminist consensus is emerging. I believe that the pragmatics of women's political

representation in the 1990s is shaping the emerging African women's movement. (Mikell, 1997: 407)

In this regard, Posel (2005) refers to the intense politicisation of sex and sexuality in South Africa since 1994 and to the distinction between the politics of sexuality and the politicisation of sexuality.

Within a modern society, sexuality is always political, as the site of multiple strategies of regulation and discipline and their uneven effects; but sexuality is only intermittently politicised, in the sense of becoming the site of heated public argument, mobilisation and conflict. Thus, if the former is a systemic feature of any modern social order, the latter is the product of particular historical conjunctures (Posel, 2005).

Therefore, in general, the above tends to run counter to the contention that women do not help women in reality but are equally as divisive as men. It will be suggested that one has to take into account the African cultural and social milieu and the commonality and sense of common purpose that exists among women in this context.

Another factor that emerged from the interviews was the unequal and uneven distribution of work and labour between the sexes and the often biased weight of family responsibility. This becomes clear from responses in the interviews such as the following. "Women are very strong but they are very busy with children but they are supporting their husbands...". Of course, poverty and the economic realities of being women and often the breadwinner in an impoverished community also featured strongly in the life experience of the women being interviewed.

It is also significant to note the degree of variance among the interviewees as to the role of men in society. One of the most disturbing views was the following: "The role of men has changed – initially before 1994 men were the sole breadwinners while women stayed home taking care of the household. Now men drink and are rapists and cannot find work therefore they are no longer the men we knew".

This is a complex view that requires a certain degree of unpacking. Firstly, the view is expressed that before 1994 men were seen as the sole breadwinners of the family and the women were tasked with maintaining the home. However, with changing social and economic circumstances these patterns of work and identity were disrupted. This can be seen to be the underlying sentiment expressed by many of the women, leading to the alarming statement that "...men drink and are rapists and cannot find work therefore they are no longer the men we knew". This also implies that the economic factors have contributed to the role of women as both providers and homemakers.

However, while this perception of men seems to exist in the community there was also clear evidence at the same time of the older patterns of patriarchy and male dominance that seem to persist. As one interviewee states: "Men want us to listen to them and that women must not have any opinion". These views relate to many of the issues noted above. Women are placed in a precarious situation in terms of ideas and self-perceptions about their identity and role. Many women felt that the traditional role of men as the breadwinner had changed, leaving them to play both gender roles and increasing their daily burden. However, what is perhaps even more disconcerting was that this view was not uniformly shared among all respondents and there was a significant variance in the women's view of men and male roles in the community – with some positive opinions but with others scathingly negative.

This in turn impacts on the issue of a clearly defined sense of identity and role. On the positive side, what also became clear from the interviews was the sense of unity and community between the women in this area, which implied support from and for women. However, at the same time there is evidence of ambivalence in terms of the role that men should play in the community. "We have therefore left the men to do their job and we have started to feel a little safer than before in our community as the criminals are not as active as they were before the men set up the committee to handle the condition of crime. We are supporting the men in all ways possible not to give up on trying to solve the problem."

What was also clear from the interviews was that women in the area face a number of social and contemporary problems that further complicate their lives. The

interviewees referred to a range of serious issues that they had to contend with – including drug abuse among their children. A central concern that arose in this regard is that many interviewees felt a certain lack of responsiveness and concern on the part of local and national government with regard to these pressing social issues. Crime, of course, featured high on the list of social problems faced by women in the areas, with many women stating that they feared to go out at night.

Another social issue with high relevance for the interviewees was alcohol abuse and its concomitant negative domestic and social outcomes. In all of these issues there was an emphasis on the role that men could play in alleviating these problems and criticism of local and national government. The economy and unemployment were also pervasive factors that featured in many of the interview responses and discussions. These were linked to government responsibility at a local and regional level.

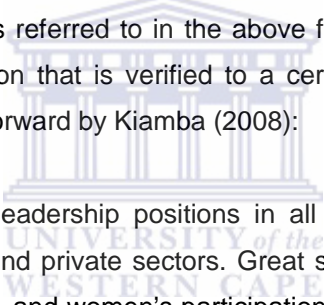
Poverty was the endemic theme that was often reiterated. "My daily problem includes that I can't even buy bread for my children. We eat bread every day and I can't buy it. I have to ask my neighbour and family but they are tired of me always asking for favours. If government could give us permanent jobs this would change our lives forever". This was linked to complaints about poor infrastructure, service delivery and prominent issues such as lack of sufficient and affordable electricity – all of which added to the burden that women had to bear.

As has already been referred to, the role of government was seen to be central to the issues discussed above and there was a considerable degree of consensus on many aspects. "If government can create jobs and support our children with jobs that would be the best thing. If our children are busy with a career they will have less time to do wrong things such as crime and drugs." At the same time, while there was a degree of consensus of view, there were also references to recognition of the positive aspects of government and a realisation that government had been effective in many areas of their lives. For example, one interviewee stated that: "We appreciate the money that government gives us but I would prefer that government gives our children skills and training to make sure that they can have brighter futures.

They could maybe train them in skills that allow them to open their own businesses since they can't create jobs”.

However, it would be useful if the political affiliations and associations could be related to the positive and negative comments on government in order to determine to what extent politics and affiliation plays a role in the view of government actions. In essence, the women saw the support of government in two ways, which can be broken down into a 70/30 split, with the majority stating that they appreciated what government did with all the social grants, and the minority stating that they felt government did nothing to improve their lives.

Possibly one of the most telling themes that emerged from the interviews was the issue of support for women. The issue of women leaders in the community follows on and conforms to many of the views referred to in the above findings. However there is an added theoretical dimension that is verified to a certain extent by the interviews. This refers to the view put forward by Kiamba (2008):



Women continue to aspire to leadership positions in all spheres of governance both in the public and private sectors. Great strides have been made in the political realm, and women's participation in both the freedom struggles and democratic processes of many African countries have been notable. However, this participation has not always translated into equal representation in political leadership positions. Once elections are conducted, and positions are assigned, one realises that women are no longer visible (Kiamba, 2008).

This situation and the need for female leadership in the country raise a number of complex and often contentious issues. As has already been referred to, this includes the problematics of the interrelationship between the need for female leadership at all levels to redress previous imbalances and the issue of female identity. This particular dilemma is expressed by one commentator as follows: "Contemporary African women sometimes think of themselves as walking a political/gender tightrope" (Mikell, 1997: 1). This perception, as has been noted above, is one that is

evident in the interview discussions and responses and is a rich area for further exploration and analysis.

On the one hand, as is evident from the interviews, women are faced with a wide array of social, economic and political problems which need to be addressed. At the same time, as Mikell (1997) succinctly puts it, they are "...grappling with how to affirm their own identities while transforming societal notions of gender and familial roles" (Mikell, 1997:1). One can refer to the interviews in this regard. As one interviewee states, "women have the main role of balancing family and having a job while also serving in a community committee. We have to play a role in parenting, feeding our families and ensuring that our families are taken care of". Women therefore find themselves having to deal not only with domestic and personal challenges but with community and leadership issues as well. This is often seen as an important but financially thankless task. "Finances are a major challenge in my life as I am only serving on the committee and we do not get paid for this role. If we could get even a small salary to motivate us to carry on that would be great." As another interviewee also states, they often have to face public criticism as women in their efforts to help the community. "People swear at us in the street should we take decisions that they don't agree with. Being a woman and being a leader is very tough because we fear for the safety of our families, and our husbands try to motivate us to quit."

An exacerbating factor is the tension between different political views and parties and the difficulty that many of the interviewees experienced in separating politics from community duties: "...very tough being a woman leader in our area because we also fight as some women leaders belong in different political parties".

This sense of their identity as leaders in the community, as well as its associated complications, extends to their relationship with local and national government. The view was expressed by a number of the interviewees that the relationship between the women community leaders and the government was often less than perfect. As one interviewee succinctly states; "our relationship with government is not that good. We try and get support from women in government as women leaders but we feel that they don't care. They don't respond to our requests they red tape us with the

personal assistants”. And: “Well, sometimes government hears our cry, other times not. We are suffering but government does not hear the urgency. We work with women sometimes in government and they help us but it is not enough and the processes are very slow”.

This was also supported by other references, for example;

I am a member of the ANC Women’s League and I was sad the ANC lost the province to the DA. But I thought that at least we will be led by women such as Zille and the other one - the Mayor. But what we quickly realised is that when they were expecting our votes they had time to meet with us they were accessible but the minute they won, their diaries were too full to meet with the women of Khayelitsha to talk about what the problems are.

In summary, from the totality of the interviews it can be deduced that the problem is a perceived gap between the leadership performance of men and women. In this regard one could refer to various studies (e.g. Lockwood, 2004) which show that, in terms of actual leadership qualities, there are no differences in gender. A good example is a study on the increased leadership roles and competence of women in leadership by Lockwood (2004) entitled “*The glass ceiling: domestic and international perspectives.*” Lockwood notes that advances have been made in recent years in addressing the issue of the advancement of women in the workplace and in the corporate environment.

## **5.1 CONCLUSION**

Gender empowerment is an aspect of our social, political and economic landscape that is deemed by many to be essential for the democratic future of South Africa. As Myakayaka-Manzini states in a previously quoted government policy document entitled *Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality: a draft policy discussion document for the City of Cape Town*:



“It is vitally important that all structures of government...should fully understand...: ...freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression....unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of women in our country has radically changed for the better, and that they have been empowered in all spheres of life as equals...” (Myakayaka-Manzini, 1998)

What is also stated in this document is that the desired state of gender equality has not yet been achieved in South Africa, despite gender equality being entrenched in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996. Central to the reasons for this disparity is the continued dominance of a culture of patriarchy in the country, which has resulted in female underrepresentation in decision-making process and structures (Myakayaka-Manzini). This is a central concern which impacts other aspects of the life of women, especially in impoverished regions.

The Interviews that were undertaken tend to support these views and largely substantiate the view that women are under-represented in the political arena. Furthermore, what the interviews clearly show is that women in this area have to deal with multiple roles and problems, which include social, economic and cultural issues. Many women often find that they have to be the breadwinners as well as maintain the family and home. This issue has led to a positive movement in the community towards unity and leadership among the women in the area. Women have tended to form groups and committees to deal with the pressing issues – which in turn have resulted in a growth in women leadership and a stronger interaction with local and national government structures. However, what is also clear from an analysis of the interviews is that there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that women are fully represented in the political structures of the country and this region in particular. While these interviews have provided a number of important insights and validations of certain theoretical views, they are only a starting point for more extensive research and analysis.

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## ANNEXURE 1

The following is a selection of some of the most prominent projects and service organisations in Khayelitsha (Site B).

- **The NDA or National Development Agency** is a body that contributes to the eradication of poverty, through development funding and capacity building. Importantly, this Agency supports civil as well as governmental development actions.
- **BIG BROTHER BIG SISTER.** This is described as a "One-to-one mentoring programme aiming at positive youth development through building trusting and healthy mentor relationships between an adult volunteer and a child in need" (Khayelitsha Services Directory). This includes the provision of positive role models for disadvantaged children.
- **Disela.** This organisation is aimed at the promotion of an equitable economic and social environment.
- **Gender Advocacy Project.** This project is concerned with gender advocacy programme and lobbying.
- **Ikamva Labantu.** Involved with the training of members of the community to assume leadership roles. This is achieved by "... giving them an opportunity to be responsible for the successful implementation of their jointly created social services programmes" (Khayelitsha Services Directory).
- **litha Labantu.** This organisation provides counselling for women who are victims of domestic violence.
- **Kwa Nothemba Workshop.** This workshop is concerned with various life skills.
- **Lonceba.** Domestic work training, care giving, cleaning, gardening and mental health care (Khayelitsha Services Directory).
- **Mosaic.** This organisation is concerned with counselling for domestic violence and abuse. Importantly, it is concerned with methods of empowering those who have experienced abuse. It also has a wellness clinic for women.
- **Nadel National Association of Democratic Lawyers.** This association promotes an "...understanding and the assertion of human rights amongst the historically disadvantaged. The broad aim of their activities is to assist in the improvement of the living standards and the quality of life of the neediest in society" (Khayelitsha Services Directory).

- **New Women's Movement.** This organisation is concerned with many aspects of upliftment of women in the community. This includes issues relating to maintenance and grants, as well as women and child abuse rights, young women's rights and education.
- **Nicro.** As well as dealing with ex-offenders, this organization also helps in terms of education, training and job creation.
- **Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children.** This centre is directed at assisting women and children who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence. Services include rape counselling, trauma counselling, HIV/AIDS counselling, substance abuse counselling and job skills training as well as emergency accommodation (Khayelitsha Services Directory).
- **Social Change Assistance Trust or SCAT.** This organisation is involved with the provision of grants for skills development.
- **Soil for Life.** Includes the provision of education and training in small-scale organic food and herb production, soil improvement methods, waste recycling, health and nutrition, nursery skills and plant propagation and setting up local markets (Khayelitsha Services Directory).
- **South African Human Rights Commission.** Deals with human rights violations according to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
- **Umacu – Managing Conflict.** Concerned with the training of women that come from abusive relationships as well as HIV and AIDS-affected women and unemployed women. This project also offers workshops on leadership training.
- **Women on Farms.** Includes training and education for women as well as support groups and outreach programmes.
- **Women's Legal Centre.** Among the functions of this centre are assistance with various women's issues such as maintenance, divorce and female abuse.
- **Yabonga Support Centre.** This centre provides support for women and children counselling, as well as HIV support groups and education. It also assists the community through the provision of food parcels, soup kitchens and income generation projects