

**THE MOURNING CULTURAL PRACTICES AMONGST THE
ZULU-SPEAKING WIDOWS OF THE KWANYUSWA COMMUNITY:
A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

BY

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2013

DECLARATION

I, Cecilia Daphney Ndlovu, hereby declare that except for the quotations indicated in this text, and such help as I have acknowledged, this is wholly my own work and is submitted for the purpose of completion of the degree of Master of Arts.

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I am sincerely thankful to all the people that were with me from the beginning to the end of this long journey. Some of them started with me from the beginning, while others in the middle and even at the end when the walk was tougher and prolonged that I almost became frustrated and stressed.

It is almost impossible to mention all the names, but I will mention just few in my sincere gratitude. These are:

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family for their support and motivation. I would not be where I am if it was not for you. My dear mother MaBhengu, my daughters - Tholakele and Thabsile, my son-in law Nkosinathi, my grand-daughter Owami and my little grand-son NtandoyeNkosi. I feel very much proud to honour you like in this way.

ABSTRACT

This study titled: **“Mourning Cultural Practice Amongst the Zulu Speaking Widows of the KwaNyuswa Community: A Feminist Perspective”** explored how mourning cultural practices contribute towards gender discrimination which results to women oppression. The main aim of this study was to document how cultural practices impact negatively to women. It focused on challenges and consequences that the Zulu speaking widows particularly in the rural areas experience during their mourning period.

Within feminism as an umbrella theory underpinning this study, radical approach was employed to address the issue to be investigated since it considers patriarchal practices as a primary cause of women’s oppression (Wills and Ellen, 1994:117). This approach enabled the study to extract the gender imbalances inherent in cultural practices, and to expose widow’s experiences, why they experience what they are experiencing and how do they perceive their experiences.

This study employed a qualitative research approach embracing the interpretive paradigm and sought to obtain a rich and deep interpretation of participant’s responses on the topic investigated. A combination of three qualitative data collection methods were used, these were: face to face interviews, focus groups discussion and participant observation. Thirty participants were randomly selected from five districts of KwaNyuswa and that include: key informants, women and men, widows and widowers and these were regarded as people who are knowledgeable and have an experience with the phenomenon studied.

Thematic data analysis was used in this study through which four themes were emerged. These themes were derived from participant’s perceptions and experiences which made it possible to meet the research objectives. The findings of this study revealed that the majority of people at KwaNyuswa consider mourning cultural practice as an integral part of their lives irrespective of its constraints or challenges it might have to the people involved. It was clear from this study that the people of this community are very much conservative and stereotyped and they do not consider anything of gender transformation or gender equality. Recommendations were made for social and gender transformation and for some means to improve the widow’s plight.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This study explored how cultural practices contribute towards discrimination against women. It focused on the challenges and consequences that the Zulu speaking widows experience during their mourning period and sought to explore various issues of gender bias and power inequalities inherent in the mourning cultural practice of the Zulu speaking people. This chapter, therefore, provides the background to the study and explains the hypothetical statement, scope and rationale of the study, aims and objectives and the formulated research questions.

1.2 Background and scope of the study

The Zulu people, especially in the rural areas, still adhere to traditional customs which are essentially predicated on patriarchal ideology and they consider these customs as the “backbone of the nation”. The consequence thereof is that patriarchal ideology continues to dominate unchecked. Women are always expected to be submissive and not question these cultural practices as though they are an immutable natural endowment as opposed to them having been socially constructed and thus prone to mutability. It is ironic, therefore, that this state of affairs prevails despite the widely acknowledged dynamic nature of culture. Notably, Clark (2006:12) defines culture as ‘a set of practices and meanings and does not consist of a fixed set of roles and rules of behavior, it is negotiable and contested.’

Similarly, Sedumedi (2009:7) argues that “culture is not static but is flexible.” Notably, despite efforts made to introduce gender policies and thus educate people about gender equality, life for the rural woman has continued to be characterized by discriminatory cultural practices informed by patriarchal ideology. The mourning cultural practice is one of the preserved traditional practices which continue to be accorded an elevated social status among the Zulu people. Krige (1974:159) on the one hand defines this mourning custom as “the means by which the social sentiments of the survivors are slowly reorganized and adapted to the new conditions produced by the death for the shock of the loss which is felt and many adjustments must be made.” On the other hand, Hockey, Katz and Small (2001:7) argue that mourning is “synonymous with grief over the death of beloved ones and is also

used to describe a cultural complex of behavior in which the bereaved participate or are expected to participate in mourning that includes social customs and mode of dress which is more emphasized to widows.”

One can, therefore, deduce that death causes trauma and thus affect the people concerned emotionally, spiritually and economically. In short, it affects all aspects of life. In the Zulu society, women generally mourn the death of their husbands by wearing a mourning dress spanning for at least one year. This dress may be black, navy, blue, green or white, depending on the religious denomination with which the individuals concerned affiliate. So, widows have to be identified by these mourning dresses. The irony, though, is that men do not wear anything when their wives pass on. They usually wrap up a shoulder with cloth for a very short period of time, usually only three months. From the feminist point of view, this cultural rite is conceived of as gender differentiation and is thus characteristically an oppressive cultural practice. Daber (2003:3) argues that “widows’ lives are governed by cultural and traditional rules which are sometimes not only discriminatory, but also involve degrading and life-threatening mourning rites”. Hlongwa (2009:3) also points out that “mourning rituals among the Zulu people are patriarchal and have men’s interest at heart.” Sedumedi (2009:8) is of the view that “only those aspects of culture that uphold the subordination of women are considered as culture” and that “culture and traditions are employed as excuses in explaining the gross violation of human rights that women suffer.”

Thus, on the basis of the widely acknowledged fact that culture is a dynamic phenomenon (Clark 2006:12), this study focused on the mourning cultural rite, and examined the extent to which the Zulu cultural practice is subjected to transformative processes emerging from the new democratic dispensation in South Africa. This study was confined to KwaNyuswa which is a rural traditional area, approximately 50 km away from Durban. KwaNyuswa is inhabited mostly by Zulu-speaking people whose traditional structures and norms still govern their lives. It is in light of this, therefore, that KwaNyuswa was identified as a suitable area in which to explore women’s experiences as well as the attitudes of the people in general towards the mourning cultural practice. The results of this study, however, can be generalized to include other Zulu speaking people in other rural areas. It is also notable that although the focus of this study was on women, it would have been remiss to have excluded men in this exploration. Pattman (2006:18) argues that “the women’s experiences and perceptions cannot

be understood unless in relation to men's experiences which exist as stereotypical opposites." Thus, mindful of these stereotypical opposites in existence between these designated sexes, an inclusive target group comprising both women and men was selected for the study.

1.3 Rationale and purpose of the study

1.3.1 Rationale

I was employed as an ABET educator in the KwaNyuswa area. Most of my learners were women. We often shared ideas and experiences of being women. During such exchanges, stories of being overruled and dominated by in-laws and spouses would surface. On account of this involvement with education in the community, I was integrated to the extent that I would be invited to community functions like weddings, *umemulo*, *umembeso*, *umbondo*, memorial services and funerals. That is when I started observing the oppressive and exploitative nature of this patriarchal community of KwaNyuswa. In particular, the practice of the mourning cultural rite which is obligatory had severe implications for women. I observed torturing, discrimination, abuse and oppression of the women in this cultural practice. Such acts were clear instances of gender bias informed by the dominant patriarchal ideology.

Having adopted the feminist perspective as a critical tool, I was motivated to engage in a critique of this mourning cultural rite with the intention of not only raising the consciousness of the subjugated women on the need for gender transformation but also to establish ways of educating the women of KwaNyuswa of their rights as human beings and citizens of South Africa. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 1996, Chapter 2, Section 9 is a specific instrument that protects the rights of women and promotes gender equality. Section 9 of the Constitution provides that: "Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law."

Notably, the Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic of South Africa. This, therefore, has serious social ramifications on society's cultural practices as such practices would of necessity be deemed invalid if they are inconsistent with the values and spirit of the Constitutional provisions. Thus, it can be argued that the provision of Section 9 of the Constitution serves as an enabling instrument towards gender transformation. It is ironic, however, that despite the existence of this empowering provision women have not taken advantage of its transformational potential in relation to their plight as women within the

oppressive structures of patriarchy. As a consequence, women continue to be subjected to more restrictions than men. These restrictions compel women to behave according to a prescribed traditional lifestyle without considering social transformation.

1.3.2 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the study was to:

- (a) Investigate what the experiences of the widows are in selected rural areas.
- (b) Document the responses of a selected group of people towards the mourning cultural practice.
- (c) Evaluate the responses and attitudes of all the people interviewed.
- (d) Determine the extent to which the practice of mourning constitutes discrimination.
- (e) Make suggestions on how this practice in the Zulu society can be transformed.

The objectives of the study were:

- (a) To explore the significance of symbolizing death among the Zulu speaking people.
- (b) To investigate gender related issues in the mourning cultural practice.
- (c) To document the experiences of Zulu widows during their mourning period.
- (d) To document the attitudes of the KwaNyaswa community towards the practice of mourning.
- (e) To critique the attitudes of the community from a feminist perspective.

1.4 The key research questions

The following were the key questions related to the study:

- (a) How do the widows of KwaNyaswa mourn? And why?
- (b) What is the significance of the mourning cultural practice to the Zulu people?
- (c) What are the gender related issues observed in the mourning cultural practice among these women?
- (d) Do the mourning cultural practices still have the same user-value they had before?
- (e) What hardships are experienced by the Zulu widows of KwaNyaswa during the mourning cultural practice?

- (f) What are the possibilities and recommendations towards gender and social transformation as it relates to the phenomenon of oppression and discrimination against widows?

1.5 Structure of the study

This study is organized into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter. Chapter 2 reviews the literature relating to the mourning cultural practice amongst the African people with specific reference to the Zulus. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study whilst chapter 4 describes the research design and methodology adopted in this study. Chapter 5 presents the analysis and discussion of the findings and chapter 6 consists of the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Across the various cultures that exist there are specific practices associated with mourning. In this chapter the literature pertaining to the mourning cultural practice is reviewed. Focussing specifically on amaZulu, the writings inter alia, Krige (1974), Msimang (1991), Nyembezi and Nxumalo (1995) and Magwaza (1999) are critiqued. The observations of social commentators like Ndiyane (2011), Moletsane (2011) and Nkosi (2012) are also discussed. As the dress code is the most significant identifier of a widow in society, much of the literature reviewed pertains to the issue of dress. Also included in this chapter is a brief cross cultural comparison with mourning practices prevalent in India, Zambia and Nigeria. The writings of Singh (2004), Phiri Zampi (2001) and Aruma and Fasoranta (2004), respectively, are examined.

2.2 Literature of related studies within South Africa

Across the world women are subjected to mourning practices. Death, burial rituals, mourning and cleansing practices have been documented by inter alia Krige (1974), Msimang (1991), Nyembezi and Nxumalo (1995) and Magwaza (1999). Krige (1974:159) highlights that:

Although all mourners were customarily expected to engage themselves in some mourning practices, in Zulu societies, it is the widow who is the main focus of mourning rituals and whose observance of *ukuzila* is most extensive and symbolically, practically and spiritually of great importance.

Msimang (1991:145) indicates that:

Umfelokazi uzila ukuhamba ibanga elide. Akakawazi ukunqamula imihlambi yezinkomo, kanti uma ehlangana nomuntu kufuneka abingelele eguqile. Umfelokazi akawadli amasi. Akathathi kuqala uma kudliwa futhi. Makungahlali muntu emva kwakhe....kuqala ubehlala eyinhlekisa ngezikhumba zezimvu kuze kuphele iminyaka emithathu.

‘The widow stops taking long walks. She cannot cross between the cattle, and if she meets somebody on the way she must greet with her knees down. The widow does not eat *amasi*. She does not partake first when people eat. No one should sit behind her... In the olden days the widow used to be a laughing stock with sheep skin for three years.’

Magwaza (1999:268) records that:

The wife of the deceased before and at the burial would be easily spotted by a large animal skin over her head concealing her from the public eye. Thereafter she will be identified by a large cowhide worn over her shoulders which she will only take off once a cleansing ceremony has been performed for her.

2.2.1 Changes in the dress code of mourning women

Magwaza (1999) notes that nowadays the skins have been replaced by blankets or rugs and the cowhide cape is replaced by the widow being clad in black from tip to toe. During a talk show on Ukhozi FM, Nkosi (2012) commented that:

Owesifazane olinyalelwe umyeni wakhe wayezila ngezikhumba. Kwakuhlathwa izimbuzi, bese kuphalwa izikhumba zazo, kususwe bonke uboya, bese embathiswa zona umfelokazi, azigqoke unyaka wonke. Owesimame ozila ngalolu hlobo yilowo osinisiwe nothelwe ngenyongo wamukelwa emzini njengonkosikazi womuzi, hhayi noma ubani nje. Uma owesimame ezilile ngalolu hlobo, wayegoya ahloniphe, engazihlanganisi nabantu, ngoba kwakwaziwa phela ukuthi unesinyama okungamele engame ngaso abantu (Nkosi, 2012).

‘A woman whose husband has passed on used an animal skin to mourn. Goats were slaughtered and make their skin supple to be worn by the widow for the whole year. A woman who does this is the one that is traditionally married, sprinkled with a gall and accepted by the ancestors as family wife not just any woman. If the widow is in mourning process she would have to confine and respect herself and not allowed to mix with other people, because it was believed that she had a shadow of death which she must not contaminate other people with it.’

Nkosi (2012) furthers the discussion stating:

Esikhathini sanamhlanje ukuzila ngezingubo eziyimibalabala akuhambisani nesimo sempilo esiphilwa ngabesifazane njengoba nabo sebengabasebenzi. Akwamukeleki futhi akubukeki ukubona owesimame eshaya ithili nengubo yenzila, phela lezi zingubo zinesithunzi okungamele kwenganywe ngaso abantu. Lokhu kufakazela ukuthi mhlampe zazingamukeleka ngezikhathi zakudala abesimame begoya uma besazigqokile. Phela kwakunemithetho okwakumele abesimame bayilandele uma besagqoke inzila okungaselula ukuba ingagcineka esikhathini samanje. Mhlawumbe kungakuhle nje owesimame uma esazilile athathe ilivu ende, okungenani yenyanga, aphindele emsebenzini esekhunyuliwe (Nkosi, 2012).

‘Nowadays mourning with different colours of clothes does not go with the current situation and women’s lifestyle as women have to go to work too. It is not acceptable to see a mourning widow (woman) with these clothes working on a till since these clothes are associated with a shadow of death, which does not need to have other people interfering with. Perhaps in the olden days it might be accepted for the widows to wear the mourning dress as they were able to keep themselves indoors to demonstrate utmost respect. Actually there were so many restrictions that widows need to conform with while they were in mourning dress which makes it difficult to observe in the modern days. Maybe it might be better if a widow would take at least one month leave while in mourning dress and go back to work after it has been taken off.’

In an article entitled “*Ukuzila ngezimnyama kakulona usiko e-Africa*” in *Ilanga* (November 7-8, 2011:9) Ndiyane states that the black mourning dress or any other colour is not the Zulu mourning custom. He highlights that it was adopted from England from what was practiced by Queen Victoria upon the death of Prince Albert. He points out that Queen Victoria wore a black mourning dress for forty years. Ndiyane explains the confusion amongst the Zulu people:

Kuvamisile ukuzwa abamnyama uma bebuzwa ngokugqoka izingubo ezimnyama bathi kuyisiko ukwenza njalo. Bancane kakhulu abaziyo ukuthi uqhamukaphi lo mkhuba. Empeleni waqala ngowe-1861 e-England emva kokushona kwenkosana yamaNgisi uPrince Albert. Ngalowo nyaka indlovukazi yamaNgisi uQueen Victoria ibonakale isidlubhe ezimnyama, izilile. Yamemezela kwindlunkulu ukuthi izogqoka ezimnyama iminyaka emibili ukuze izenelise ukuthi izile ngokwanele. Namanye amalunga asendlunkulu ezwakalisa ukuthi nawo azongena kwezimnyama ukulekelela indlovukazi, abesilisa bona bagqiza ngendwangu emnyama emkhonweni yezingubo zabo. Kube umkhuba wabo-ke abesifazane uma beshonelwe ukuba bafake izingubo ezimnyama umzimba wonke. Naso- ke isikhathi sokuzila sibe iminyaka emibili, abesilisa bona bazila unyaka owodwa ngokufaka amabhande ezingalweni (Ndiyane, 2012).

‘It is often heard when Africans are asked about black mourning dress and they say it is a cultural phenomenon. There are very few people who are knowledgeable of an origin of such practice. In fact this was started in 1861 in England after the death of an eldest son of English Prince Albert. In that year, Queen Victoria was seen in black as a sign of mourning. She announced in a Royal Council that she was going to dress in black for two years so as to satisfy herself that she has mourned enough. The other members of the royal family followed suit, while male members decided to wear a black strip on their sleeves. Wearing of black all over the body became a normal practice as a sign of mourning for widows. Two years became a standard period of mourning for widows and one year for widowers.’

2.2.2 Social commentators

Magwaza (2006:114), discussing the gendered social constructions embedded in dress points out that:

As societies were transformed from predominantly rural to urban industrial entities, the values that emerged coincide with the Zulu traditional way of life - there was a strong desire to emulate the white employer's dress code, his individual and economic prosperity. All of these values were applied to the domain of males, rather than to females. Similarly, in the new dispensation that followed the apartheid era, the calls for renaissance or the need to claim back African culture and the way of life seem to be directed to women, or are mainly responded to by the women as custodians of tradition and culture.

Magwaza's comments are applicable to traditional communities like KwaNyaswa where variations of women's status are revealed by dress. For example, being married, widowed, loss of a child, loss of mother or father in-law is symbolized in a certain dress code. But men are always in the same dress code of their choice; no matter what has happened in their families or to themselves. In that case it is true that the Zulu women are the keepers of the traditional customs. What is happening in the Zulu society is that the '*Back to our roots*' slogan is directed only to the women in that they are expected to maintain and nurture the cultural traditional practices.

In an article entitled "Some of our roots should be left to rot" in UKZNDABA (vol.no.3 March, 2011:7) Moletsane argues that:

It is highly possible that the things we now re-claim as "our culture" and of course nobody is exactly sure what that culture is-never really existed, and if they did, perhaps they did not happen the way we think they did. Even if they did, can we re-enact things that were practiced thousands of years ago in a changed and ever changing world?"

Moletsane further argues that in our patriarchal societies the notion of *going back to our culture* is used to regulate the lives of girls and women. One can infer that Moletsane's argument is that African women are burdened with traditional customs. These customs are not necessarily relevant nowadays. But, often, many traditional people neither understand that culture is an ever changing phenomenon nor accept that each generation has the right to contribute its experiences of the world to a culture. A generation of people is entitled to drop things that are no longer useful to them and that means what was practiced by their ancestors might not be practiced by this new generation. Moreover, circumstances might not be conducive for the observance of some cultural traditional practices.

It is worth considering Bryant's (1949:38) crucial issue of levirate marriage which was normally practiced by the African people where the widow was expected to marry one of her husband's brothers. If the woman failed to comply with that she was dismissed from the family and sent back to her parents, leaving behind property including the children. This cultural practice is still observed in some traditional societies. It is oppressive and abusive. But many widows would prefer to submit themselves rather than to lose their property, worst of all losing their children. Arguably, in the twenty first century such a practice should be obsolete as mitigating circumstances such as HIV render this cultural practice insignificant.

2.3 Comparative study of mourning practices

For comparative purposes the literature on the phenomenon studied was also examined in India, Zambia and Nigeria. It was established that discrimination against women or widows is a global issue which is mostly influenced by different religions as well as different cultural beliefs. It was further established that even in other countries outside South Africa, women are considered as chief mourners who have to bear all the mourning rituals, some of which are abusive.

2.3.1 Status of widows in India

Singh (2004:68) points out that with the Indian people the tradition of disempowering the widows of all rights and privileges was introduced on the pretext of it being a religious practice. Singh outlines some of the conditions which were and still in practice as follows:

- (a) Widows had to shave their heads.
- (b) They had to wear a common cotton sari (long garments) of a particular colour, usually white day in and day out.
- (c) They could not wear any make-up or jewellery.
- (d) They had to avoid all outings and visiting of relatives.
- (e) They were not allowed to visit temples or take part in any religious ceremonies.
- (f) They were disciplined not to appear in the presence of visitors or in front of the bride and groom even if it was the widows own son.
- (g) They were made to feel as if they were non-existent.

2.3.2 The status of widows in Zambia

Phiri Zampi (2001:16) points out that with the Chewa people in Eastern Zambia immediately when the death of a husband occurs, the woman is expected to cry and wear a black dress and sit on the floor in the funeral house. As a sign of mourning the widow (mnikazi wa masiye) is not expected to bath, change clothes, wear shoes, smile, talk loudly, cook or eat too much. The widow should always tie a black scarf across the head. After the burial of the deceased husband, all the family members including the widow and the orphans will have to shave their heads and bath together as a sign of grief. After the funeral the widow is expected to wear different clothes but should be black in colour to show that she is a widow and has not yet been cleansed and inherited. The widow will be in the mourning dress for a year. No one is expected to sleep with a widow until she is cleansed.

2.3.3 Status of widows in Nigeria

Aruna and Fazoranta (2004:60) point out that amongst the Yoruba people, a wife is perceived as a stranger among her husband's family. They are therefore ready to throw her away like a useless appendage the moment her husband dies. This results in the widow being poor. Some widows are subjected to certain degrading rites in the process of mourning. For example, a widow could be asked to marry the junior brother of the late husband and in the event of her refusing such an offer, she would be disowned by the late husband's family and banned from inheriting any of the dead man's property, while all the household properties would be carted away by the family members. Such women have had to rely on the help and assistance from friends and social organizations to which they belonged in order to cater for themselves and their children.

Some widows are accused of killing their husbands in order to inherit their estate. After the accusation, they could be asked to swear with either the Holy Quran or the Holy Bible to prove their innocence. Sometimes the water used for washing the corpse could be given to the widow to drink in order to prove her innocence. The process and duration of wearing dull brown to black clothes without having to bath could last from seven days to two weeks while the duration for wearing dark clothes ranges from three months to a year.

Aruna and Fazoranta (2004:67) also discuss the status of widows amongst the Igbo. Many Igbo widows have to wear the mud cloth upon the demise of their husbands. The time of wearing this varies from seven days to one year depending on the community's emphasis. It

is mandatory for the widow to wail at the death of her husband either three times in a day or once in a day for three or seven days. During the mourning days, the woman's hair is scraped and she is expected to sit by the corpse of the husband warding off flies. During the initial seven days of mourning, the widow is expected to sit on bare floor or mat but definitely not on a stool or a bed. She is expected to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots.

2.4 Summary

The literature review in this chapter has revealed that the mourning practice was imposed by a set of cultural rites. Amongst African people this practice is constructed on the basis of gender and is oppressive, abusive and more discriminatory towards women. Widows are considered as chief mourners who must bear all the pain not only internally but have to expose their pain to the public. Ironically, widowers are largely excluded from more demanding mourning practices. The literature review illustrates that women are still treated as inferiors in society. Cultural norms and practices do not seem to have improved especially in the rural communities in Africa and elsewhere. Thus, during mourning, the widow's plight is physically, mentally, psychologically and spiritually challenging. The next chapter presents the theories and paradigms underpinning this study.

CHAPTER THREE

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical perspective used in this study. According to Seale (1998:103) “theories arrange sets of concepts to define and explain a phenomenon, and without a theory the phenomenon cannot be understood”. In this sense without a theory there is nothing to validate research. So theories provide the impetus for research study.

3.2 Principal theories for the study

Feminism was employed as the principal theory for this study. According to Archer (2004:48) “Feminism is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of ideologies and political perspectives. But, it focuses on women’s issues as a priority”. Ritzer (2003:39) asserts that:

The feminist movements in Western countries started in the 1780s and protested against male oppression and such protests were neglected by the sociologists, the majority of who were men. It was only in the 1960’s that female and male sociologists addressed feminist concerns as a discipline, from then gender concerns have been put up as a theory to consider women issues.

Ritzer (2003:44) further contends that “feminist theory seeks to provide a system of ideas about human life that features women as understood from a women centered perspective”. The theory takes into account the situation and experiences of women in society. According to Ritzer, “feminists seek to treat women as subjects in their own right in the investigative process.” He further postulates that everywhere women have always been subordinated. Notably, there are several descriptions of the term feminism. Overall (1987:2) describes it as, “a commitment to understand women’s own perception of their situation, these perceptions are what is called gender basics.” Beasley (1999:27) defines feminism as:

an advocacy of women’s rights based on a belief in the equality of the sexes, and refers to everyone who is aware of and seeking to end women’s subordination in any way and for any reason.

Feminist theories, therefore, provide a platform for women to voice out their concerns. Since 1994 the South African constitution has advocated gender equality for everybody and it discourages any form of discrimination.

Feminist theory suggests that societies are structured in a way that is oriented towards privileging certain groups. In most societies men generally have more power and more opportunities and considered stronger, more rational or better in a number of ways. Within patriarchal culture, identities are always gendered identities. Gender constitutes our sense of who we are and what we can and cannot do (Kiguwa, 2004:268). Gender is a socially constructed phenomenon, thus patriarchy and the oppression of women have to do with society and its way of thinking (Mpungose, 2010:5).

The above statement is especially true in respect of African societies where men are always given a higher status than women. In the case of cultural practices like mourning, widows are more burdened than widowers. The former have to comply with so many oppressive rituals which demonstrate their submissiveness to men. Therefore, feminist theory was employed in this study to explore the perceptions and experiences of Zulu speaking women and men of KwaNyuswa concerning the mourning cultural practice. The feminist approach was selected for this study because it rejects hierarchical power relations between men and women in its quest for an egalitarian society towards empowering women as subjects as opposed to them (women) being mere subordinates.

3.3 Principles of feminism

The following key principles identified by Kelly et al (1994:32-34) were crucial to this study:

- (a) The feminist approach acknowledges the need for commitment in taking seriously the experiences of women. The women's perspectives are placed in the centre of the discussion by actually asking: "What about women?" This study was then undertaken to explore the widow's experiences during their mourning practice and to critique gender inequality and discriminatory elements inherent in this cultural ritual.
- (b) The feminist approach recommends the use of qualitative assessment in order to see the world from a distinctive perspective. In this study, the qualitative approach was used to investigate the context as well as the real experiences of the widows as

opposed to making them agree or disagree with what has been hypothesized by the researcher.

- (c) The overarching goal of feminism is to concentrate on women's experiences in a respectful manner that legitimizes women's voices as a source of knowledge. Although the study was about the mourning cultural practices amongst the Zulu speaking widows, the focus was on the widows' experiences as they are essentially marginalized and dominated by men, as well as their perception regarding this cultural ritual.
- (d) Feminism is the belief that universally women face some form of oppression or exploitation. Therefore, feminists perform an information gathering function to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression in all its forms and thereby seeks to initiate social change. The intention of this study was to provide the women, especially the widows, the opportunity to tell their stories by recounting their personal experiences on the mourning cultural practice. Thus the purpose of this study was to document their current situational experiences and recommend the need for social transformation.
- (e) Both the researcher and the participants openly recognized their positions. Because I come from an urban area, and work as an educator, I was aware that some of the participants might perceive me as being superior to them. As a consequence of this, I consciously attempted to dispel such a notion by telling them my own challenges of being a single woman. As a result they were more than willing to tell me their experiences as well as their perceptions of the mourning cultural practice.

3.4 Approaches within feminism

Kiguwa (2004:272) points out that there are various approaches within the mainstream of feminism, some of which include: radical feminism, post-structural feminism, liberal feminism and Marxist feminism. Radical feminism was adopted for this study, as it is more suitable and relevant to explore the assumed oppression of the widows of KwaNyuswa community through the culture of mourning practice.

Radical feminism

Kiguwa (2004:273) defines radical feminism “as an approach which considers patriarchy as a primary cause of women’s oppression which exists in a capitalist and socialist society as well as in the institution of family and marriage.” According to Willis and Ellen (1984:117):

Radical feminism aims to challenge and overthrow patriarchy by standard gender roles and the male oppression of women, and calls for a radical reordering of society. It is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, more specifically social dominance of women by men. Radical feminism opposes patriarchy not men.

Benbow (1994:28) further points out that:

Women’s grievances are the response to social structure in which women are intentionally dominated, exploited and oppressed. Radical feminists consider masculine power and privilege as the root cause of all forms of inequality, patriarchy is seen as a tool for domination over women.

The fact that women are seen as biologically weak, in comparison to men, makes them viewed as “other” (Kelly et al, 1994:59). Kelly further asserts that radical feminists argue for the condition that recognizes both the uniqueness and separateness of women and the recognition of their worth as being equal to that of men. These are the reasons which prompted my choice to be guided by the radical feminism theory as sought to explore the gender discrimination embedded in the mourning cultural practice.

Radical feminists hold that gender is entirely a social construct made for the benefit of patriarchy, and that the true equality between the sexes can only be brought about by bringing down these social construct along with the rest of inequality. Their main aim is to transform the societies from patriarchal ideology. Bryson (1999:82) avers that “the law has served men’s interest ...and that it cannot be used to gain genuine equality”. Rather, attitudes have to be reshaped to address women’s concerns. She points out that the concept of equality should be expanded to include the areas where women are in reality most disadvantaged.

Radical feminists believe that by eliminating patriarchy and other systems which perpetuate gender domination everyone will be liberated from an unjust society (www.feminism.com/radicalism.html-24/03/2012). Kumalo (2011:6) argues that “patriarchy is not in our DNA but is taught to us, we have been socialized into it”. He insists that, as

South Africans, we can do away with patriarchy if we want to. So, given the fact that gender discrimination is socially constructed, enforced and practiced by community members, it can be stopped by them.

Radical feminists are primarily concerned about equality in the family and in personal life. They focus more on women in the private sphere. They see patriarchy as a systematic, institutionalized and pervasive form of male power that is rooted in the family. The pattern of male dominance and female subordination that characterizes society is a reflection of the power structures that operate within domestic life. (www.feminism.com/radicalism.html-24/03/2012).

It is, therefore, in light of the above discussion that the radical feminist approach was adopted in this study as it promotes the eradication of patriarchy, fights for gender justice and the welfare of African women.

3.5 Summary

The mourning practice is one of those traditional customs which are socially constructed and internalized by communities. It manifestly perpetuates sexism and gendered stereotypes that are degrading the status of women – widows in the context of this study. Patriarchal practices promote the subordination of women by men. This radical feminism was employed in this study as it is meant to challenge and fight the oppressive patriarchal practices towards social transformation culminating in the empowerment of women, especially in rural areas. This study was thus located within the interpretive and feminist paradigms. The qualitative approach was employed to extract in-depth understanding on the phenomenon investigated. The following chapter presents the research methodology that was used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology, research paradigms, research design, population sample, sample and sampling technique used in this study. It also presents the data collection methods, data analysis and the validity and reliability of the data.

4.2 Research paradigms

Ulin, Robinson, Trolley and McNeil (2002:12) define the term paradigm as:

A framework which provides researchers with a unified set of concepts, principles and rules for conducting a research study. It is a world view that presents a definition of the social world linked to related sources of information (data) and appropriate ways (methods) to tap those sources.

Ulin et al (2002:16) identify three theoretical paradigms for gender. These are:

- (a) research based on *positivist* principles
- (b) research that uses an *interpretivist* approach
- (c) research shaped by a *feminist* perspective.

Ulin et al point out that interpretivist and feminist orientation typically lead to the use of qualitative research strategies. This study is located in both interpretivist and feminist perspectives which are explained as follows:

Interpretivist is a paradigm that sees the world as constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with wider social systems and a feminist perspective is concerned with the gender power dimension of a social phenomenon that shapes people's lives (Ulin et al, 2002:23).

Neuman (1997:62) asserts that:

Although interpretivist and feminist paradigms employ both qualitative and quantitative approaches, they favour qualitative methods of data collection and analysis more than those of quantitative. These paradigms also offer “rich/thick” description of a phenomenon, situation and activity in order for one to understand the subjective world of human experiences.

The interpretivist and feminist paradigms were identified as the most suitable paradigms for this study which sought to explore the gender inequality inherent in cultural practices which are socially constructed and internalized by the community members of KwaNyuswa. These paradigms are relevant as they facilitate the discovery of the women’s perspective concerning the mourning cultural practice. In addition, the widow’s experiences and her interpretive understanding of the mourning cultural rites can be explored using these paradigms. In other words, the interpretive paradigm allowed me to understand the phenomenon studied and analyse the qualitative data meaningfully to get a better understanding of the widow’s plight.

4.3 Research design

According to Mouton (2001:57), “the research design is a blue print of how one intends to conduct research and the direction the researcher will take.” This study mainly used the qualitative approach as it (the study) is located in the interpretative paradigm. According to Seale (1998:17) interpretivists tend to favour qualitative rather than quantitative methods. This is because on the whole, researchers find that people’s words provide greater access to their subjective meaning than do statistical trends.

This study focused on the experiences of the widows during their mourning process and the gender imbalances which were assumed to be inherent in mourning cultural practice. The qualitative approach was found to be effective. According to Singh (2004:48), the:

Qualitative approach makes it possible for the researcher to get close to the data in order to produce certain levels of explanation in what is being observed. This gives the researcher an opportunity to interact with the speakers by engaging in a dialogue without any preconceived notions of what the problem areas might be. It is an ongoing process in which the researcher will understand the phenomenon being studied from the participant’s point of view.

Similarly, Neuman (1997: 44) argues that:

The qualitative approach has the potential of obtaining adequate information about community's actions, perceptions, attitudes, constraints and experiences. It is interested on how people make sense of the world and how they experience events. The major interest is meaning which is how people make sense of their experiences and structures in the society.

Babbie (2001:78) points out that:

Certain research questions can be more fully answered and explored with certain qualitative methods. Qualitative research allows participants to express their feelings and offer perspectives in their own words.

In this study, the use of open ended questions in unstructured interviews and focus group discussions allowed the participants the freedom to relate their experiences. This study was also shaped by the feminist perspective where social conditions of women in a sexist and patriarchal society like KwaNyuswa are studied. Therefore, employing the qualitative approach in this study gave the women a platform to voice out their experiences and their perceptions concerning the mourning cultural practice.

4.3.1 Population study

The study was carried out at KwaNyuswa, a rural traditional area approximately 50 km away from Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. Most of the men of KwaNyuswa work in Pinetown. The nearest town to KwaNyuswa is Hillcrest, which is about 10 km away from the area. KwaNyuswa consists of ten districts, namely: Mathebethu, Ezitholeni, Mondli, Sidanga, Mlambo, Mngeni, Shelela, Mabedlane, Mayinga and Nhlambamasoka. These areas are under the jurisdiction of *uNkosi* Ngcobo. However, each district has its own *induna* or headman.

The intended study population was 40 Zulu-speaking people: 20 men and 20 women. This number included widows, widowers, church leaders and district headmen. The religious leaders were chosen on the understanding that they have good knowledge of what it is to be both a Christian and an African with the background of African cultural practices. The headmen were also involved as typical traditionalists, keepers of traditional customs and teachers of the community who convey African cultures and social beliefs to the community.

The participants were between the ages of 30 and 65. These ages were considered knowledgeable enough regarding what they were talking about and what is good or not good for them. All the participants were drawn from five out of the ten districts of KwaNyaswa. The selected districts were: Ezitholeni, Shelela, Sidanga, Mngeni and Mathabethu. The choice of the participating districts was based on the fact that these districts are recognized as highly dominated by patriarchal ideology. It was thus assumed that they would yield rich data for the study of the phenomenon under investigation.

The following tables illustrate the demographic information for this study.

TABLE 1: Actual number of participants

Gender	Anticipated Number	Actual Number
Females	20	16
Males	20	14
Total	40	30

TABLE 2: Ages

Age	Females	Males
30 – 39	2	-
40 – 49	2	3
50 – 59	7	2
60 – 65	5	9

TABLE 3: Marital status

Female			Male		
Married	Unmarried	Widows	Married	Unmarried	Widowers
7	3	6	8	3	3

TABLE 4: Occupation

Females			Males			
Employed	Housewives	Pensioner	Employed	Headman	Church leader	Pensioner

5	6	5	6	3	4	1
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TABLE 5: Religious denomination

Nazareth	St Johns Apostolic	Zion	Roman Catholic
10	7	8	5

The research was conducted using three sets of informants:

- (a) Headmen and church leaders.
- (b) People from the KwaNyuswa community (married and single).
- (c) Widows and widowers from the KwaNyuswa community.

Headmen and church leaders = face to face interviews

Widows and widowers = face to face interviews

General population = Focus group

4.3.2 Sample and sampling technique

A sample is defined by May (2001:93) as a larger group of a population. The requirement for this study was to have participants who are knowledgeable and have the experience of the phenomenon studied. Even though the study was about the women’s assumed oppression the sample had to include men for data validity and also for non-bias research purposes.

According to Cohen et al (2001:48):

Sampling methods are classified as either probability or non-probability or purposive sampling. The principle of probability sampling is easy to understand. It is that everyone in the population of interest should have an equal chance of being chosen for the sample.

Biber et al (2006:61) argue that “if your goal as a qualitative researcher is to infer generalizations, then you need to concern yourself with randomly sampling your population”.

This study employed the random sampling technique which was later followed by the snowball form of sampling whereby the selected participants identify more people who are willing to participate and who meet the requirements of the study. This sampling technique was convenient to the researcher and in fulfilling the aims of the study. Its choice was also based on the hope that the results of this study can be generalized to include other Zulu

widows living in rural areas. Therefore, the members of KwaNyuswa community were randomly approached from the selected areas with the assistance of the community leaders. Three different sets of samples were planned:

- (a) Key informants
- (b) Focus group discussions
- (c) Face to face individual interviews.

Different selection techniques were used for each sample as follows:

Set 1: The key informant participants in the interviews involved 5 headmen for each area selected for the study and 4 church leaders: Zion, Roman Catholic, Nazareth and St Johns Apostolic Faith Mission.

Set 2: The focus group discussions involved 10 married and unmarried women and 10 married and unmarried men.

Set 3: The face to face individual interviews involved 6 widows and 5 widowers.

It was mentioned earlier on that this study was planned to have 40 research participants, but only 30 availed themselves for the interviews and discussions. However, each district and each religious denomination was represented in each category. This was done for the purpose of ensuring data validity and the reliability of the study. The participants had to be those who had spent more than five years in the district of KwaNyuswa and who are regarded as being knowledgeable on the social norms and beliefs of the community being studied.

The real names of the participants were not used in the transcripts. Instead, the identity codes and numbers were allocated to them as follows: MW= married woman, SW= single woman, WW= widowed woman, MM= married man, SM= single man, WM= widowed man, HM= headman and CL= church leader. (See Appendix Two) for participant's demographic information.

4.3.3 Validity and reliability

Collins et al (2000:191) define reliability as:

the degree to which a scale or an interview questions yield consistent results or scores, and that validity is the degree to which the measurement actually measures what the researcher intends to or claims to measure.

Therefore, in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected for this study, the focus was planned to be on those individual members of the community who were either regarded as being knowledgeable on the community cultural rites and those who experienced the mourning cultural practice and willing to talk about it.

All the districts that participated in the study were represented in all the interview categories. Although the focus of the study was on women's experiences during their mourning period, men were also involved to be part of the study for validity purposes. The feminist approach specifies that the renderings of gender category or identity make sense only in relation to characteristics constructed as 'gendered other' (Pattman, 2006:67). This implies that women's experiences and perspectives cannot be understood unless they are juxtaposed with men's experiences which exist as stereotypical opposites.

4.3.4 Data collection

Introduction

According to Ulin et al (2002:69) there are three primary methods which form the bedrock of qualitative data collection: participant observation, in depth interview and focus group discussions.

The aim of this study was to explore the Zulu women's experiences, perceptions and their understanding of the mourning cultural practice which was assumed to be gendered and oppressive to them. It was anticipated that the combination of participant observation, unstructured interviews and focus groups discussions in this study would yield data quickly and in big quantities on the phenomenon investigated. Unstructured face to face individual interviews were implemented as they allow freedom of speech for both interviewer and interviewees. Willing (2001:64) argues that "unstructured face to face interview is like an informal conversation, with the emphasis on narrative and experiences." The open ended questions used in this method allow the participants to narrate more fully on their experiences

as well as their perceptions relating to the phenomenon investigated. In this study, I had the opportunity to probe for more information from the participants. Above all, the interviews were more preferred for the type of study participants as most of them are illiterate and unable to read and answer questionnaires.

According to Babbie (2001:66) “focus group discussions provide the researcher with an opportunity to observe a vast amount of interaction on a topic within a limited period.” Babbie defines a focus group as a carefully planned discussion that is designed to obtain people’s perceptions with regard to a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The contact between the participants and I in the focus groups and unstructured interviews made it possible to clear up any misunderstandings in terms of participant’s interpretations of the questions and that helped to ensure the validity of the data collected.

4.3.5 Qualitative data collection methods

Focus groups discussion

Two focus group discussions were conducted for this study with one consisting of 10 married and unmarried women and the other one consisting of 4 married and unmarried men. The main aim of this grouping was to get different ideas and perceptions on the phenomenon studied and to get a holistic view of how they construe the plight of widows in their community and also to establish how they understand the issue of gender equality. The same questions were prepared for both groups and were only used as a guide to answer the study research questions. Using a voice recorder allowed me to focus on the interview without interrupting the flow of the respondents’ responses.

Face to face interviews

The face to face individual interviews were planned for 5 widows and 5 widowers, though it ended up with 6 widows and 3 widowers. The aim was to elicit responses of each individual’s experiences and their perceptions of the mourning cultural practice. The questionnaire was used as a guide for the interview process although questions were made open ended so as to allow the interviewer to take cue from the participants. Probing questions were also used to get data relevant to answer the research questions. All the interviews and discussions were conducted in Zulu and some were voice recorded. Some interviewees, especially the widows were not comfortable with the recording done during the process. Thus, in my view, the interviewees’ discomfort in this regard can be accounted for by the fact that the experiences

they were narrating were sad and sensitive. Also, they discussed their ill-treatment by in-laws and were reluctant to have these recorded. This then necessitated that notes taken in this regard I had to assure them again of their safety in relation to their participation in the study.

Participant observation

According to Marshal and Rosman (2006:49) “observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry as it brings the researcher into direct interaction with the people and their activities.” For this purpose I had to involve myself in vigil (umlindelo) and funeral services to collect more data. That involvement afforded gave me the opportunity to obtain rich information on how the mourning cultural practice was observed in this community of KwaNyuswa. The process of observation was also done by noting the interviewee’s body language during the interview proceedings. The results of the participant observation were used to establish indications of the obstacles and hardships experienced by the widows and the gender discriminatory elements inherent in the mourning cultural practice.

Key informants

Only 4 church leaders and 3 headmen availed themselves for interviews. They were considered as gatekeepers - people who possess a special knowledge of social and religious beliefs concerning mourning cultural practices. It was assumed that the key informants would assist in explaining the cultural norms that govern this cultural practice, how much do they value this practice, the extent to which they deal with it and how they understand the issue of gender inequality which might be inherent within this cultural practice. They were of great help to organize the participants and also to identify the widows as well as the widowers in the community.

4.4 Data analysis

Data was analysed qualitatively using the interpretive thematic analysis whereby the participants’ responses were catergorised according to the response frequency to develop some themes. Thereafter, the results were subjected to qualitative interpretive analysis. According to Cohen et al (2001:285):

data analysis involves the researcher taking a large amount of data collected and reducing it to certain patterns, categories, or themes, and then interpreting it.

In the light of the above, the interpretive thematic analysis was employed in this study as it is recommended by Ulin et al (2002:143) as “an approach which is more practical and short cut for qualitative study”. Aronson (1994:2) defines the thematic analysis technique as “a process whereby themes and patterns emerging from the study are identified and used in the building of a valid argument”.

The following thematic analysis steps outlined by Tesch (1990:45) were employed in the analysis of data:

- (a) Getting the sense of the whole: The researcher reads the transcript more than once in order to familiarize herself and become intimate with the data.
- (b) Data cleaning: the unwanted data is eliminated. The researcher will focus on the relevant data that answers the research questions.
- (c) Developing the classification system and categories: While the researcher rereads the transcripts, ideas on what the participants were trying to say is jotted down in the margins.
- (d) Coding data material: The interviewees’ responses are grouped together into categories that bring together similar ideas.
- (e) Formulation of themes: Themes are formulated from the topics within developed categories.
- (f) Cut and paste: Topics with similar ideas are cut, sorted and pasted together under the relevant themes.
- (g) Recording the data on the paper.
- (h) Data verification.

The validity and reliability of the findings ascertained through the process of interpretive thematic analysis technique were improved when combining them with the relevant literature.

4.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology employed for the study and the justification of its choice. It provided a detailed explanation of the research paradigms, design, study population, study sample and sampling technique, data collection method, data collection process, data analysis, validity and reliability of data and also the ethical considerations. The next chapter presents and discusses the data and its analysis.

CHAPTER 5

5. MOURNING CULTURAL PRACTICES AND WIDOWS' EXPERIENCES: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the mourning cultural practice and experiences of the widows of KwaNyuswa. The thematic analysis technique explained in Chapter 4 is used following Tesch's eight steps in presenting the data. The following four themes are discussed, namely:

- (a) social beliefs and expectations
- (b) gender discrimination and stereotypes
- (c) stigma, intimidation and attitudes
- (d) opinions

The themes are analysed according to the responses from the following followed by a discussion of the results:

- (a) key informants
- (b) women's focus group
- (c) men's focus group
- (d) widowed women
- (e) widowed men

5.2 Thematic data analysis

The following section presents the themes derived by categorising the responses from the different participants and the research questions responded to:

TABLE 6: Themes, categories and research questions

THEMES	CATERGORIES	QUESTIONS
1. Social beliefs and expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ life after death ▪ sitting (<i>ukugoya</i>) ▪ cold bath every morning ▪ non-exposure to the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the significance of mourning cultural practices?
2. Gender discrimination and stereotypes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mourning dress ▪ mourning period ▪ issue of bride's price (<i>ilobolo</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do the widows and widowers of KwaNyuswa mourn?
3. Stigma, intimidation and attitudes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contaminate others with death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in the family - in community - at church - at work ▪ excessive loneliness and isolation ▪ suspicions and ostracisation by in-laws ▪ insults by neighbours ▪ crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the challenges and experiences faced by the widows during their mourning period? ▪ How is the attitude of the society towards widows?
4. Opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ building up of morals ▪ value of culture ▪ family decision ▪ encourage culture of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is your opinion about mourning cultural practice?

5.2.1 Theme 1: Social beliefs and expectations

Theme 1 was derived from the participant's responses to the question: *What is the significance of the mourning cultural practice to the Zulu people?* The majority of the participants in all the groups were of the view that mourning cultural practice is very important to them. They cited a number of social beliefs which confirm the importance of the practice. They are under the conviction that this cultural practice is done to honour the deceased, to pay respect to the ancestors and to preserve the African culture. Some of these participants pointed out that despite the challenges attendant to this cultural practice, it should be observed to avoid detrimental results to the family involved. This was attested to by the following quotations:

The key informants

Thina maZulu sikholelwa ukuthi uma kufile kusuke kwehle elimnyama ekhaya, ngakho-ke umndeni wonke usuke usebumnyameni. Uma ke kungubaba wekhaya oshonile umama kumele lesi sinyama akuso asitshengise ngenzila, ukuze phela ahloniphe idlozi lalapha ekhaya, naye ahlonipheke emphakathini (HM3).

‘We, black people, believe that when death is a sign of bad luck, therefore the whole family is in the darkness. If the father of the house passed on, the mother should symbolize that darkness by mourning dress so as to respect the ancestors of that home and make herself respected by the community.’

Isiko lokuzila libaluleke kakhulu kithina, futhi sikholelwa ukuthi uma ungalenzi idlozi liyakushaya. Phela konke osuke ukwenza sikholelwa ukuthi basuke bekubona abalele, uma ungasazili bayakujezisa ngoba usuke ubadelela. Siyakholelwa ukuthi abangasekho kulo mhlaba basuke sebesondelene noMvelinqangi, besicelela nezibusiso (CL1 & CL2).

‘The mourning cultural practice is very important to us, and we also believe that if you do not observe it the ancestors will punish you. Actually we believe that the ancestors see whatever you do, if you do not observe the cultural mourning practice they punish you because you mean to despise them. We believe that our ancestors are the ones who are next to the Lord to plead for blessings on our behalf.’

The key informants are concerned with the preservation and continuation of the mourning cultural practice since it is a tradition from time immemorial. Also, emanating from these informants is a sense that the man holds a higher status and the woman is expected to mourn in a particular way. The ancestors, the cornerstone of the Zulu culture, are also integral to the mourning cultural practice.

The women’s focus group

Libaluleke ngempela leli siko, sikhule lenziwa, mhlawumbe sekungaba inkinga uma singaligcini. Khona linezinkinga eziningi esikhathini esikuso kuningi okwakuvumelana nempilo eyayiphilwa kudala, ukugoya, ukugeza entathakusa ngamanzi abandayo nokugqoka izingubo ezimnyama kona kubadalela izinkinga abesimame abashonelwe (Women focus group).

‘This cultural practice is very important, it was practiced when we grew up, perhaps it might be a problem to stop observing it now. Even though it has a lot of problems in this current context, many of these practices were relevant to the olden days’ life style, sitting, early morning bath with cold water and wearing of black clothes do cause a lot of problems for widowed women.’

Echoing the sentiments of the key informants, the women's focus group also notes the importance of the continuation of the mourning cultural practice.

The men's focus group

Ukuzila kuyindlela yokutshengisa umphakathi ukuthi usebumnyameni udinga inhlonipho kuwona, futhi uma uzilile nawe uqobo kuyakusinda ukwenza izinto ezibheke eceleni, inzila ikwenza ukwazi ukuzithiba ezintweni ezibheke eceleni uhloniphe lo muntu osedlulile emhlabeni (Men's focus group).

'Mourning practice is a sign of showing the community that you are still in darkness and you expect respect from them, and if you are still in mourning process it is hard for you to do any wrong things, it makes you abstain from wrong things and respect the one who has passed on.'

The men's focus group appears to be concerned with appearances. From the quote above one can deduce that there is a perception that a bereaved woman receives special respect, perhaps a respect not accorded under normal circumstances. There is also a sense that women are generally occupied with questionable activities and only during mourning do they "behave". It is as if the mourning cultural practice is a means to control a woman's behaviour.

The widowed women

The widows are under the conviction that using of mourning dress is an African cultural practice which signifies the feelings the widow has for her deceased husband, and these widows emphasize the fact that despite the stress attendant to this they have to do it. This is attested to by the following responses:

Leli siko liyindlela yokutshengisa ubuhlungu onabo ngalowo osedlulile emhlabeni, nokumhlonipha yena uqobo ngoba usuke ekhona eduze ekubhekile ukuthi wenza kanjani. Khona liyisiko elisindayo kithina esisuke sifelwe abayeni (WW3).

'This cultural practice is the way of showing the pain you have about the one who has passed on and to respect him because he is still around you observing whatever you do. It is a challenging custom to us as widows.'

Ukuzila kubalulekile, ikakhulukazi uma uzilela umuntu obekuthanda nawe umthanda, phela kusuke kuyinkomba yokuthi ubabaluleke kangakanani empilweni yakho. Okuyinkinga nje kuba yilezi zinto eziningi otshenwa zona okumele uzigcine, zikubukanisa nezwe (WW2).

'Mourning is important, especially if you are mourning for somebody who loved you and you also loved him. This is actually a sign of to show how

important he was in your life. The only problem is the lot of things you are being instructed to observe which make you a centre of attraction.’

Widows continue this trend of concern regarding their appearances. There is a sense that an overt display of mourning is symbolic of the affection for the spouse who has passed on. One suspects a degree of melodrama in these performances. What is also interesting are those widows who acknowledge that mourning is “a challenge” but they do not appear to make any attempt to alter the practice.

The widowed men

Ukuzila kuwuphawu lokuhlonipha nokutshengisa uthando lwaloyo osedlule emhlabeni. Thina-ke maZulu sinezindlela eziningi esizisebenzisayo ukugcina leli siko, ikakhulukazi abesimame kuningi okulindeleke kubo, akufani nathi bantu besilisa esizila ikakhulukazi ngezinhliziyi (WM1).

‘Mourning cultural practice is a sign of showing respect and love to the one who passed on. We, Zulu people, have a lot of methods to observe this custom, especially the women who have so many things which are expected from them, they are unlike us who only mourn with hearts.’

Ukuzila phela kusho ukuzithiba nokuhlonipha lowo osuke esedlule emhlabeni, esikholelwa ukuthi usuke esekhona eduze kwakho futhi ezoba yidlozi elizobheka ikhaya. Inkinga nje sekwaba yiko ukuthi ezinye zezinto ezenziwayo seziyaphambana nesikhathi esiphila kuso (WM3).

‘Mourning means to abstain and to respect the one who had passed on as we believe that he/she is still around you and is going to be ancestor who will look after the home. The problem is that some of the performed practices are outdated.’

The widowed men acknowledge the importance of the mourning cultural practice in terms of sustaining and continuing the Zulu culture. They acknowledge that the practice has more expectations for widows and they also note that some customs are outdated.

In this theme of Social Beliefs and Expectations, all the groups were of the same view that the mourning cultural practice is vital for the preservation of the Zulu people’s tradition. All the groups acknowledge that despite the constraints of the practice, the status quo must be maintained.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Gender discrimination and stereotypes

The theme of gender discrimination and stereotypes was revealed by the research questions two and three: *How do the widows and widowers of KwaNyuswa mourn? / Are there any gender related issues observed in mourning cultural practices?* When the participants responded to the question of how widows and widowers of KwaNyuswa observe the mourning cultural practice, the majority of them unanimously agreed that it is not the same and will never be the same for both women and men. Most of the participants are under the conviction that a man is the head of the family who will become a strong ancestor with the potential to look after his family. It was contended that a man's death must therefore be treated differently from a woman's death. This was captured in the following responses:

The key informants

Indlela esizila ngayo kulo mphakathi wakithi ihlukene ngokwamahlelo esikhonza kuwo, kodwa okubalulekile nje ukuthi kumele kuzilwe ukuze kuhlonishwe phela osethule. Thina-ke sikholelwa ukuthi owesimame othweswa kakhulu umthwalo wokuzilela indoda yakhe, ngoba phela uma isithule indoda isuke isithwele amandla angale kwelamathongo uma-ke owesimame ezila ngokugqoka ingubo enombala ozothile usuke etshengisa ukuzotha nokuhlonipha idlozi elingumyeni wakhe nezinyanya zalapha ekhaya. Lokho-ke akunakuqhathaniswa nokuzilela owesifazane phela omama abanawo amandla obudlozi (CL1).

‘The way we mourn in our communities varies according to our religious denomination, but what is important is that we must mourn to show respect to the one who has passed on. We believe that a woman has to mourn for her husband because after passing on, he becomes a powerful ancestor, if the wife wears dark coloured clothes she is paying respect to the ancestor who is her husband and the other family ancestors. This cannot be compared to how a husband mourns for his wife because women do not have ancestral power.’

Indoda iyohlale iyinhloko ngisho isilele ngomqolo ndodakazi, lokho kusho ukuthi inkosikazi yayo kuyomele iyizilele ukutshengisa inhlonipho. Ukuzila okwabo abantu besimame ngisho kwelobabamkhulu, thina madoda sifela ngaphakathi. Phela yingakho nje thina maZulu umuntu uma engaganwa eze eba mdala kubuzwa ukuthi uyozelelwa ubani. Usuyothi ubona umndeni usuhlanganisa amakhanda useyalotsholelwa ngoba kubalekelwa ihlazo elingenzeke uma eseshona engekho omhlalelayo okanye omzilelayo (HM3).

‘A man will always be the head of the family even when he is lying on his back deep in the grave, my daughter. This means his wife must mourn his death to show respect. Mourning is for females even in the world of our forefathers. We, men, do not express feelings and loss, that is why with use, as amaZulu, when a man reaches a marrying age without getting married, the question is always posed on who will mourn for him. Then the family puts

their heads together, and pay *ilobolo* for him because they are running away from the shame they would face if he died with no one to pay respect or mourn for him.’

The key informants advanced two main reasons justifying why women have to be subjected to the mourning cultural practice for their deceased husbands. Firstly, men are considered as heads of the families. Secondly, the payment of *ilobolo* appears to have a clause requiring the performance of the mourning cultural practice. The informants are quick to point out that women’s mourning will never be the same as the men’s mourning due to the fact that *ilobolo* is paid for them. The role of ancestors ensues in this theme and many are under the conviction that only men become powerful ancestors. It is contended that even beyond the grave, the man continues his reign as a dominant being.

The women’s focus group

The majority of women in the focus group pointed out that *ilobolo* plays vital role in their lives. On account of *ilobolo* women believe that they have to comply with whatever is prescribed for them, irrespective of their feelings. This emerges in the following quotes:

Uma ungumfazi ulotsholiwe awukwazi ukuphikisana nenqubo yasemzini. Usuka kwenu wazi kahle kamhlophe ukuthi uzokwenza konke okwenziwa emendweni. Nakho-ke ukuzilela indoda usuke ukwazi ukuthi uma ifa kuyomele uyizilele, uthanda noma ungathandi uyayigqoka inzila wenze yonke inkambiso yakuloyo muzi, phela uma ungakwenzi lokho uyobe uzithela ngehlazo futhi bayokuthuka abasemzini (Women focus group).

‘If you are a woman whom *ilobolo* was paid for, you cannot act against the customs of your husband’s family. The woman leaves her family knowing very well that she will do everything which is practiced by her husband’s family. Even mourning the husband’s death is one of the things that she knows she must do whether she likes it or not. She must wear black clothes and perform customs of her husband’s family, because it is shameful to not do that and the in-laws would insult her.’

Amadoda ayohlale engamadoda nje kwaphela, nathi siyohlale singabafazi nje, angeke sathi ngoba sizila ngale ndlela esizila ngayo namadoda akazile kanjalo. Uma amadoda esakhokha ilobolo kuyomele siwazilele ukutshengisa uthando. Yebo khona kunakho ukuhlukumeza ukugqoka inzila nokwenza la masiko ahambisana nokufelwa. Mhlampe okungenziwa ukugwema lokho kuhlukumezeka, hhayi ukungazi. Futhi nje kungaba ihlazo ukubona indoda ihlezi kumatilasi izimboze ngetshali, mina nje angeke ngakuvuma lokho kweyami indoda ngisho sengilele kobandayo (Women focus group).

‘Men will always be men, and females will remain females, we will never expect men to mourn like us. As long as men still pay *ilobolo*, we have to mourn them to show love. Yes there is an element of abuse in wearing of mourning clothes and performing mourning practices. Maybe what can be done is to stop the abuse, and deal with ignorance. And also it would be shameful to see a man on a mattress, covered in a rug. I myself would never allow that to happen to my husband, even when I am lying dead in the cold chamber.’

Clearly, the practice of *ilobolo* is construed by the women to mean that they are bound to respect all the mourning cultural practices. Apparently, there is no overt opposition to the mourning cultural practice as it is generally accepted that mourning is expected of women as opposed to men. This fact notwithstanding, some of the women from the focus group indicated that their religious denominations dictate who to mourn, how to mourn and how long the mourning should take. This is attested to by the following responses:

Amasonto ethu lawa esikhonza kuwo nawo anomthelela omkhulu ekugqugquzeleni amasiko agqilaza abesifazane, uthola kuyiwo agcizelela ukuthi umfelokazi akenze lokhu nalokhu ukuze ahlonipheke. Nazo lezi zingubo ezimbalabala zigqugquzelwa yiwo la mabandla. Bagcizelela nokuthi lezi zingubo zenza owesifazane akwazi ukuqoqeka. Konke lokhu okwabesimame, inhlonipho nokuziqoqa kusho ukuthi okwabesifazane abesilisa kulungile bona badlebeleke nje (SW2).

‘Our churches where we worship also have a big influence in promoting customs that are repressive to women, you find them saying a widow must do this and that so that she can be respected. Even the different coloured mourning dresses worn by women are promoted by our churches. They also emphasize that such garments cause a widow to be orderly in their behaviour. Respect and being organized thus seems to be for women, consequently men seem to be exempted from the order and do as they please.’

Iqiniso kumele silibeke licace ukuthi empeleni okuningi kwalezi zinto ezenziwa uma kufiwe zazingenziwa kuqala, okuningi kufike nayo inkolo le yabelungu. Ukugoya isonto lonke kwakungekho ngoba umuntu wayehamba namhlanje afihlwe ngakusasa. Izingubo lezi ezigqokwayo nazo zazingekho, umfelokazi wayegundwa ikhanda aheziswe nje kuphela. Uyobe-ke esezila ukwenza izinto ezithile ezingamdlebelelekisa agweme nokuhamba imicimbi. Lokhu kugqama ngezingubo eziyimibalabala kwakungekho. Inkolo le esigqilaza kakhulu abafelokazi (MW7).

‘We need to say the truth as it is, actually most of the things that are practiced today were not done in the past, a lot of them came with western religion. Sitting in the confined area for the whole week was not done because if a person would die today, would get buried the following day. These clothes that are worn were not there, the widow was only expected to shave her head, wear a neck band, and refrain from doing certain things which may cause her

to be disorderly and stop attending public ceremonies. This showing off with colourful dresses was not there. Religion has strongly oppressed widows.'

The men's focus group

The men are of the view that there is nothing seriously prescribed for them to mourn for their deceased wives. Their responses indicated that they are under the conviction that the wearing of the mourning dress is an African cultural practice which must be unconditionally observed by the widows. This was captured in the following quotation:

Isiko yisiko nje kwaphela, ukuze sibone ukuthi owesimame oshonelwe umyeni wakhe kumele agqoke inzila. Ukugqokwa kwenzila kuyisiko nje elimile nokumele abesifazane baligcine ukuhlonipha abayeni babo. Ukugqokwa kwenzila yiko okwenza abantu bakuhloniphe ngoba kukunika isithunzi esikufanele uma usahanjelwe umyeni wakho, kugweme nathi abesilisa ukuthi singalokhu sikulinga njengoba usesebumnyameni (Men focus group).

'Culture is culture that's all, for us to see that a woman has lost a husband she must wear black clothes. The wearing of mourning dress is the custom which is here to stay and which women must keep in order to show respect to their husbands. The wearing of mourning clothes causes people to give you respect, because it gives you the deserved dignity when you have lost a husband. It also stop us, males, from tempting a widow into love affairs because she is in the dark.'

When the men in this focus group were asked what would happen if the wife's employer did not allow the mourning dress at the work place, they were all of the view that the wife would have to choose who to respect, her deceased husband or her employer. This is reflected in following quotation:

Yingakho nje kungamukelekile ukusebenza kowesifazane, ngoba kuyamdida angabe esaqonda ukuthi ubani omkhulu indoda yakhe nobasi. Mina owami unkosikazi akasoze asebenza ngoba ngibalekela zona izinto ezifana nalezo. Kumele azi ukuthi yimina ngedwa indoda phezu kwempilo yakhe njengoba ngamkhiphela izinkomo (Men focus group).

'That is why it is not acceptable for women to work, because the work confuses her and then she fails to weigh who is superior between her husband and her boss. My wife will never work because I am avoiding such things. She must know that I am the only man in her life because I paid *ilobolo* for her.'

Izinto zoniwa yinina zifundiswa. Unkosikazi uma elotsholiwe uyazi naye ukuthi uma ngifa kuyomele azile, okushiwo ubasi wakhe akuhlangene nami. Loyo basi kumele azi ngamasiko esisebenzi sakhe, azi futhi ukuthi ubuswa imithetho yalapha ekhaya, akenzi umathanda nje (MM2).

‘Things are spoiled by you learned people. My wife knows that when I die she will have to mourn for me, what her boss says does not concern me. That boss should know about his or her employee’s culture, and know that she is governed by rules of this family, she cannot do as she likes.’

The widowed women

The widows conceded that sometimes they feel obliged to mourn for their deceased husbands because this is what they were taught and observed in their upbringing and socialization. This is captured by the following response:

Mina umama wamzilela ubaba efele le eGoli esehlala nomunye unkosikazi, kodwa ngoba wayazi ukuthi nguye umfazi owakhishelwa izinkomo wamzilela. Phela umphakathi wawulindele ukumbona efake inzila wawumbheke ngabomvu ikuthi uzokwenzenjani. Nami-ke angizange ngingabaze ukuzilela umyeni wami noma ngase ngingasahlali naye, kodwa ngoba besingakafaki isahlukaniso ngabuya ngamhlalela emakhandleleni ngamzilela kwaphela unyaka (WW6).

‘My mother did mourn for my father who died in Johannesburg whilst staying with another wife, because she knew she was the wife for whom the *lobolo* was paid. The community expected to see her wearing black clothes, they were closely watching what she was going to do. I also did not hesitate to mourn for my husband even though we were not staying together, but because we were not divorced I had to come back and sit for him with lit candles and wore black clothes for a year.’

The above quote clearly shows that some of the practices are just passed from generation to generation, taught from early childhood and internalized to shape the woman’s adulthood, and usually it is hard for many women to denounce what they appropriated in their socialization.

The widowed men

The widowed men were of the view that women’s mourning will never be the same as the men’s because, as already indicated earlier on, *ilobolo* is paid for them. This information was captured by the following response:

Lapha KwaNyuswa umfazi olotsholiwe uyazila. Uqala ukuzila ngosuku lokuqala kuzwakele ukuthi umyeni wakhe ushonile. Ukuzila kwakhe angeke kwafaniswa nokwethu. Silindele ukumbona egoyile laphaya endlini enkulu, ezembozile angabonwa abazomkhalisa. Uzogoya lapho kuze kushaye ilanga lokufihlwa komyeni wakhe. Sekuyothi emva kokubekwa komyeni wakhe agqoke ingubo yokuzila okuyiyo abonakalisa ngayo phela ukuthi

ulahlekelwe indoda ukuze umphakathi umhloniphe. Uma engakwenzi lokhu siyaqala simbuke ngelinye iso (WM2).

‘Here at KwaNyuswa a woman for whom *ilobolo* has been paid, mourns from the day the death of her husband is announced. Her mourning observation cannot be compared to ours. We expect to see her sitting in the confined place in the main house, covered with a blanket so that those who are coming for condolences do not see her. She stays there until her husband is buried. Then after the burial she must wear mourning clothes so that everybody can see that she has lost a husband, and be respected by the public. If she does not do this we look at her with disapproval.’

The majority of the participants interviewed expressed similar sentiments that mourning practices for widows were an integral part of the Zulu culture and had to be preserved regardless of the gender imbalances and challenges it might have for widows.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Stigma, intimidation and attitudes

The above theme was derived by categorizing the responses from all the groups of the participants when they answered the question on *how the attitude of the community towards the widows is*. Notably, most of the information came from the widows when they narrated their experiences on their mourning period. The majority of the participants indicated that the community and the family members have a negative attitude towards widows. Despite the prevalence of this negative attitude, many of the participants were of the view that this should not result in the stopping of this cultural practice. Instead, bad attitudes must be discouraged. This was captured in the following quotation.

The key informants

Owesifazane ozilile usuke elekwe isithunzi somyeni wake, yingakho nje kwakuba nomthetho wokuthi uma esambethe lezi zingubo kumele aziqoqe angazihlanganisi neningi, ngoba isithunzi sakhe weleka ngaso abantu, naye uqobo uba nesidina ngenxa yalesi sithunzi esikuye. Isiko angeke liyekwe, kuphela alenziwe ngendlela, abaziqoqe abafelokazi (HMI).

‘A female in mourning is shadowed by her dead husband’s spirit, that is why there was a rule that when a wife is still wearing black clothes she must behave orderly and not gather with many, because she will shadow other people with her bad spirit, even she herself has bad luck because of this spirit. Culture should not be stopped but it should be done properly, widows should behave themselves.’

The above quote attempts to justify the ostracization that the widows are subjected to. It acknowledges that this is severe but sees no reason for the practice to stop. Contrary to the first quote, the two quotes below acknowledge that the treatment of widows is shameful and a sad reflection on human beings.

Maningi amacala angena lapha kimi abafelokazi besagqoke ezimnyama bebika ukudlelwa kwabo izindawo ngomakhelwane, abanye bephucwa amafa ngabasemzini, abanye bexoshwa ngisho ukuxoshwa emizini yabo. Empeleni kuyaye kujabhise lokhu kubantu bakithi ngoba phela kumele ngabe uyahlonishwa owesimame uma esagqoke lezi zingubo. Isiko alone lutho abantu abadlebelekile nje (HM3).

‘There are many cases which are reported here to me whilst widows are still wearing black, reporting their neighbours taking their land, others their estate taken by in-laws, others being chased away from their houses. Actually causes sadness on our people because this woman should be respected whilst she is wearing black clothes. There is nothing wrong with the cultural practice, it is just that human behaviour have gone out of hand.’

Angeke sikuphike ukuhlukomezeka kwabafelokazi kubantu bakithi, bahlukunyezwa mhla kwasa bengenelwa ezindlini bedlwengulwa khona besagqoke inzila. Kuphele onembeza kubantu bakithi, abasenandaba nesinyama (CL2).

‘We won’t deny the abuse of the widows by our own people, they are attacked and raped in their houses while still in mourning clothes. Our people have no conscience, they are no longer afraid of bad luck.’

The women’s focus group

The women from the focus group concurred with the aforementioned comments. They indicated that:

Njengoba inzila iyingubo yobumnyama bokufa iyasidala isigwagcwa kubafelokazi, yingakho nje uthola benokhlukomezeka nakubantu abasondelene nabo, angisayiphathi-ke eyomphakathi. Akekho umuntu ojabulela ukuhlala eduze komfelokazi, kuyesinda ukusondelana naye (SW1).

‘As the black clothes are clothes of darkness of death it causes bad luck to widows, that is why you find them being intimidated even by people who are close to them, let alone the community. Nobody enjoys sitting next to a widow, its hard being close to her.’

Iyadabukisa indaba yabafelokazi uma sebhlukezeka emphakathini. Thina lapha endaweni omunye intsha yamkhanda ngamatshe ngoba ithi uyathakatha, engani yayimbona njalo entathakusa enyusa umhoshha ngezingubo ezimnyama ephuma kogeza phela. Hhayi bathwala kanzima

shame, kodwa akukho okungenziwa ngoba isiko lethu leli, uma ungasaligcini uthwala kanzima emndenini, nedlozi liyakushaya (MW2).

‘The issue of widows saddens when they are being abused in the community. Here in our area the youth hit the widow with stones saying that she is a witch, because they use to see her in early hours of the morning moving up the gorge from the morning bath. Hey, they bear the hardship, but nothing can be done because it is our culture, if you do not keep it you experience hardship from the in-laws and the ancestors turn their backs on you.’

Two women from this focus group made somewhat different observations as evidenced below:

Kuyajabhisa ukuthi ubone owesimame nezingubo ezimnyama esesemathaveni, ephuma engena emadilini, ememeza ephuma phezulu. Yibona abazenza balahlekelwe isithunzi bathatheke kancane, uma befuna ukuhlonishwa kumele bazihloniphe bona kuqala (MW1).

‘It is disappointing to see a female with black clothes at a tavern, going in and out of ceremonies and talking on top of her voice. It is sometimes their fault to lose dignity and be undermined. If they wanted to be respected they would respect themselves first.’

Mina nje ngimsaba kabi owesimame ozilile, angisabi isinyama anaso ngisaba izenzo zakhe. Lezi zingubo zabo ezimnyama azisawenzi umsebenzi wazo wokuthi bahlonipheke ngoba bazisebenzisela inkohlakalo, yizo abamema ngazo abayeni bethu ngoba sebenzimali zokufa kwabayeni babo, nawo-ke amadoda angothathekile akacushwa, azithela kuso lesa sinyama (MW4).

‘I strongly fear a woman who is wearing black clothes, I do not fear the darkness she has but her deeds, these black clothes of theirs do not serve its purpose to be respected because they use them for wrong doings. They use them to lure our husbands because they have estates of their late husbands, our husbands are easily enticed and easily trapped in ill-luck.’

Two perspectives from the responses of the women’s focus group can be derived: one affirming the poor treatment of widows and another suggesting that widows, despite obeying mourning the dress code, do not necessarily obey the rules of appropriate behaviour.

The men’s focus group

Offering a slightly different perspective from the above, one of the youngest men from the focus group indicated that sometimes the type of the job the widows do for a living might cause them not to earn the respect they deserve while they are in the mourning dresses. This is captured in the following quotation:

Uma umama ozilile enomsebenzi wejoyinti ukuze aziphilise yena nabantwana akulula ukuthi ahlonipheke, kunalokho yena uqobo uyadlebeleka, ngoba kuningi akwenzayo kungafanele, nani okwenzayo nimthathe kalula, phela akwenzayo akuhambisani nezembatho zakhe (SM1).

‘If a widow runs a shebeen so that she and her children are able to make ends meet, it’s not easy for her to be respected, instead she herself continuously behaves disorderly because she does many unnecessary wrongs, which causes you to undermine her. Infact what she does, does not match the clothes she is wearing.’

The widowed man

Abafelokazi bahlukumezeka kakhulu kunathi madoda afelwe, nezinhlamba ezinzima ziyabalandela emphakathini nasemndenini, angikhulumi-ke uma eke wangayigqoka inzila, noma futhi eseyigqokile kumele abheke izindlela zakhe ngoba bazomthuka nangayo. Kodwa iqiniso ukuthi angeke kwathiwa akuyekwe inzila ngalokho, kumele kulungiswe izimilo zabantu. (WM2)

‘The widows suffer a lot than us widowers, and bad insults follow them from the community and the family, it’s worse if she did not wear black clothes, even if she has worn it she must mind her ways because she will be insulted with it. The truth is that we cannot stop our mourning customs just because of this, what needs to be corrected is people’s behaviour.’

One of the widowers held a different view regarding the wearing of the mourning dress as he sounded to be totally against it. He emphasized that the Zulu people should be careful of practices introduced by Westerners through their religion.

Empeleni inzila le egqokwa abafelokazi inawo umthelela ekuhlukunyezweni kwabo. Yiyo ebadonsela amanzi ngomsele, mina angikaze ngihlukunyezwe muntu selokhu ngafelwa umkami. Wena ulindeleni uma uzothi usebhadini lokufelwa umyeni uphinde uzogqoka izingubo ezimnyama, vele zonke izindlela zakho zizoba mnyama, nabantu bazokunyanya. Anozibheka phela izinto nani bantu besimame, ikakhulukazi lezi ezafika nabamhlophe. (WM3).

‘Actually the black clothes that are worn by widows do have an influence on their abuse. It is these clothes that invite trouble for them, I have never been abused since my wife passed on. What do you expect when you have the spell of losing a husband and you wear black clothes, all what you will have is misfortune, and people will hate you. You must scrutinize things carefully you females especially those which were introduced by whites.’

The widowed women

The Zulu people are said to be under the conviction that death is contaminated. Therefore, the widows must avoid mixing themselves with other people in order to protect themselves, and people in general should try by all means to distance themselves from them. This was captured in the following statement:

Ngangifana nenja enukayo nasemndenini wami imbala, ngisho izitsha engangidla ngazo zazigezwa zodwa, zibekwe zodwa ukuze zingadli abanye abantu. Ngisho indishi engangigeza ngayo yayingathintwa omunye umuntu ngaphandle kwezalukazi zalapha ekhaya (WW1).

‘I was like a smelling dog even to my family, even the dishes I was using were washed and kept separately so that others could not use them. Even the bathing dish was not touched by other people except the grannies of the family.’

Ngahlaliswa izinyanga ezintathu zonke ngingalubeki esontweni, kwathi noma seziphelile sengiya ngahlaliswa ngedwa le emumva (WW6).

‘I was made to stay for three months without going to church, even after three months when I started going to church, I was instructed to sit alone right at the back.’

Nalabo othi ngabangani bakho bayakuhlamuka uma usugqoke lezi zingubo. Ngaba ukubuyela nje emsebenzini abantu bonke bangishalazela. Nalaba esaidla ndawonye nabo sihlanganyela imiphako bangitshena ukuthi bona abasakuphathi ukudla bazama ukwehlisa imizimba (WW2).

‘Even those you call them your friends desert you when you are wearing mourning dress. When I went back to work everybody started to avoid me. Even those that I used to share my lunch with told me that they are no longer carrying lunch boxes because they are on diet.’

The widows narrated numerous sad stories deriving from their mourning period. They even burst into tears while telling about the challenges they encounter during the cultural mourning period. The following was cited:

Inkinga esinayo thina bafelokazi eyenhlamba ngapha nangapha. Okubuhlungu ukuthi kubantu basemzini indoda ayizifeli nje, kodwa iyabulawa, uma ukhaliswa yilokho, bathi uyazenzisa ufihla ihlazo, uma ungakhali uhlulwa nawukuzenzisa, uyejabula ngezenzo zakho. Uma ufaka inzila ufihla ihlazo, uma ungayifaki inzila kufanele ngoba uwena oyibulele. Hhayi bo kunzima ukufelwa dadewethu, nawe ugcina usufana nohlanya, futhi ungacina usuzibulele ngenxa yesihluku osithola kubantu basemzini (WW4).

‘The problem we have as widows is the insult from all sides. What is painful with in-laws is that, the husband does not die naturally, but is killed. If if you cry, they say you are pretending and hiding the shame, if you do not cry you are even failing to pretend, you are happy with your deeds. If you wear black clothes you are hiding the shame, if you do not wear them it’s because you are the one who killed the husband. Hhey, it’s hard to be a widow, my sister, you end up behaving like a lunatic, and killing yourself because of the cruelty meted out to you by in-laws.’

Emva kwezinyanga ezintathu ngifelwe yindoda ngavalelwa umndeni wakamyeni wami, wangitshena ukuthi kuzomele ngamukele umfowabo womyeni azomisa umuzi. Ngathwala izandla ekhanda, ngayobika ekhaya ngale ndaba, nabo bangichitha ngokuthi kumele ngenze lokho okushiwo ngabasemzini. Kwaba nzima kakhulu kimi lokho, futhi Okubuhlungu lo muntu wayesanda kushonelwa inkosikazi okwakungaqondakalanga ukufa kwayo. Bangixosha ngisagqoke yona inzila le. Ngathi ngiyobikela induna yendawo yangitshena ukuthi isiko ukwenze njalo. Ngathutha, ngihamba ngimpampatheka nabantwana. Ngawushiya umuzi wami umile. Ngaze ngacoshwa yinangu umama wabantu owangipha itoho lokuziphilisa nendawo yokukhosela (WW2).

‘Three months after my husband had passed on the family of my late husband told me to accept his brother as my new husband. I cried and went to report the matter to my family. They did not give me any support but told me to go back and do as my in-laws say. It was hard for me and what was more painful is that this person had lost his wife in a sinister way. They chased me away whilst I was still wearing black clothes. I went to report this to the local headman and he said it is our culture, I had to do it. I had to move out with my children with no place to stay. I left my house like that. I was eventually picked by this woman who gave me work and shelter.’

Abangani nomakhelwane bayakuhlama, basaba lezi zingubo ozembethe sengathi nabo uzobathelela ngokuthi bafelwe ngamadoda abo, kokunye njalo besaba ukuthi uma besondelana nawe uzobathathela amadoda abo ngoba wena awusenayo. Uphenduka inkomo edla yodwa. Nomphakathi kuba sengathi uyawunukela, uma etekisini sekusele indawo yomuntu oyedwa okumele ahlale ngakuwe uncamela ukuthatha itekisi elandelayo. Mina nje ngagcina sengigibela amabhasi uma ngithuke ngaya edolobheni (WW3).

‘Friends and neighbours desert you, they are scared of the clothes you are wearing as if you are going to pass the spell on them to lose their husbands, sometimes they are afraid of you because they think you are going to take their husbands because you have lost yours. You become isolated. Even to the community it’s like you have a bad smell, if there is one space left next to you in a taxi people prefer to wait for the next one than to share a seat with you. I ended up using buses if I occasionally went to town.’

It is apparent that from the widow's perspective, the mourning cultural practice is harsh. The experiences recounted above bear testimony to this and that stigma and intimidation (real and perceived) abound. Notably, it is only women who are subjected to these painful experiences.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Opinions

This theme is based on responses to the question: *What is your opinion regarding the mourning cultural practices?* Although the participants viewed the phenomenon under investigation differently, the majority emphasized the need for the preservation of the mourning cultural practice. Although they acknowledge the oppressiveness and gender biasness of the practice, they nevertheless consider the mourning cultural practice to be an integral part of the Zulu culture.

The key informants

Similarly, the church leaders and community headmen expressed the view that the mourning practice is the most important custom to be observed by the widows and thus cannot be withdrawn. For them, what needs to be done is to develop the community morals in order to eradicate negative attitudes towards widows. This was captured and revealed in the following quote:

Isiko lokuzila alone lutho, kumele ligcinwe, kuphela okumele kwenziwe ukuvuselela ubuntu nobuqotho emphakathini, kufundiswe futhi ngokubaluleka kwamasiko empilweni ukuze abantu bakwazi ukuwahlonipha ngendlela. (CL's & HMen)

'There is nothing wrong with the culture of mourning, the only thing to be done is to rekindle human qualities and morals in the community and teach people about the importance of cultural practices so that they can respect them.'

The men's focus group

The majority in the men's focus group shared the same view that whatever is entailed in the mourning cultural practice to be observed by widows should be an agreement between the wife and her husband. It was said:

Mhlawumbe kungakuhle ukuthi abantu abaganene bazihlele bona ngabafuna kwenziwe omunye uma omunye edlula emhlabeni, bese bewazisa nomndeni ukuze kugwenywe ingxabano nempikiwano uma sekufiwe. Ngaphandle nje

kwendaba yesiko lokuzila, nokwabiwa kwamafa kumele kube yinto ebekwa ezithebeni (Men focus group).

‘Perhaps it might be better if the couple could plan on what is to be done if one of them passed on and inform the family about it in order to avoid disputes and arguments when death occurs. Besides the story of mourning practice, even the the division of the will must be transparent.’

The women’s focus group

The majority of the women in the focus group shared the same view that the community leaders and church leaders should come together to revise the mourning cultural practices.

This was captured in the following comment:

Abaphathi bomphakathi nabaholi bamabandla abake bahlangane balufakele izibuko lolu daba lwamasiko, ikakhulukazi lokugqokwa kwenzila, babhekisise nokuthi kusafezeka yini lokho okwakuhloswe ngayo esikhathini samanje. Mhlawumbe lokho kungancono kunokuba abafelokazi bamane baziyekele nje ngoba umphakathi nemindeneni yabo uyobagxeka (Women focus group).

‘The community leaders as well as the church leaders need to come together and review this matter, especially of wearing the mourning dress, to find out if it still serves the purpose it was meant to serve. Perhaps that might be better than the widows taking their own decision of not wearing the mourning dress because the community and the families will criticize them.’

It was also indicated that:

Esikhathini sanamhlanje asisekho ngempela isidingo sokugqokana nengubo yenzila, abesifazane nabo abazile ngezinhliziyi njengabo abesilisa (SW2).

‘Nowadays there is really no need of wearing mourning dress, the women should do like men who mourn by hearts.’

The widowed women

The majority of the widows conceded that the oppression and abuse are caused by lack of knowledge. This was captured in the following comment:

Thina bantu besifazane sazifaka thina enkingeni nale nkolo esayigijimelayo, yiyo le esisenza sihlukumezeke, uthola amadoda engagqilazeki ngalutho nje uma kufe omama ngoba akazange agxumele le nkolo. Akuselula ukuphuma kule nkinga ngoba seyathathwa yenziwa isiko, sekumele zilime ziye etsheni (WW6).

‘We, females, put ourselves into trouble with this religion we ran into, it is the one which causes us to be abused. You find that men have no worries if their wives have passed on because they did not jump into Christianity. It is not easy to get out of this problem now because it is taken as a culture and so we have to go on with it.’

However, one of the widows differed with the above idea, in that she said:

Iqiniso kumele silibeke ngokusobala nje ukuthi thina bafelokazi siyohlale sihlukumezekile ngenxa yokungabi nalo ulwazi lwezinto, ukungafundi kwethu kwenza ukuthi sithathe konke esitshelwa kona nesikhule kwenziwa. Sekuyosizakala bona abantwana bethu laba esibayisa ezikoleni (WW4).

‘The truth must be put straight that we widows will always be victimized because of our ignorance, our lack of education makes us take everything people tell us and what was practised when we were going up. Our children will be advantaged because we send them to schools.’

The widowed men

The widowed men were of the same opinion that as long as *ilobolo* is still paid for women, the mourning practice cannot be abandoned. This was captured in the following response:

Uma sifuna ukushintsha izinto asibheke macala onke, nathi madoda sibhekelwe okusihlukumezayo, njengalo nje ilobolo. Kuyasihlukumeza ukuthi uma ungenankomo, namali angeke ube nomfazi. Ngineqiniso ukuthi ilobolo linomthelela omkhulu ekuphogeni abafelokazi ngesiko lokuzila. Mina ngafelwa umkami, akukho muntu owayengishayela umthetho ngenza okwakufiswa inhliziyoyami (Widowed Men).

‘If we want to change things, both sides must be considered. The things that might worry us as men, for example *ilobolo*, must also be reviewed. It worries us that if you do not have cattle you cannot have a wife. I am certain that *ilobolo* has a negative impact in compelling widows to observe the mourning cultural practice. I lost my wife and no one told me what to do, and so I did what I thought was right for me.’

Although the majority of the participants consider the mourning cultural practice as an integral part of their lives, it is clear that this custom is oppressive on widows. All the groups that participated tacitly acknowledge that the mourning cultural practice is a challenge. Men appear to be more tolerant of the practice. Women have a range of opinions. Some women feel that it is the duty of the church and the community leaders to address the issue whilst others blame their lack of education for their predicament. Interestingly, however, no one

appears to be aware of the Bill of Rights which makes provision for gender equality between men and women.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

This section discusses the research findings of the study using the radical feminist theory as a critical perspective. The discussion is structured according to the themes utilized for the data presentation.

5.3.1 Social beliefs and expectations

From the responses of the participants it became clear that the patriarchal nature of the KwaNyaswa community has a negative impact on the widows. The mourning cultural practice is influenced by traditional beliefs and patriarchal ideology. The findings of the study revealed that the people of KwaNyaswa strongly believe in ancestral spirits and all rituals and social beliefs connected with them are still practiced. Their social beliefs of death influence the mourning cultural practice which evidently impacts negatively on the widows.

The majority of the participants conceded that the mourning cultural practice is an important custom which must be preserved. They believe that this cultural practice is a sign of showing love and respect for the deceased. They strongly believe in life after death. Whatever they do, is done to honour and satisfy the living death, that is, the deceased and the ancestors. This supports the statement made by Canonici (in Mathonsi, 2002: 26) that “ancestor’s veneration is a cornerstone of Zulu life because the living dead are there to assist us in our needs, if we do what is right.”

The use of the mourning dress was identified in the literature review as a practice which sustains the mourning cultural practice. The Zulu people are convinced that this practice is their original cultural custom, which was passed on by their fore-generations and they have to preserve it. This was attested to by almost all the participants, when they responded and emphasized that this practice is highly entrenched as part of their lives and thus deserves to be preserved and practiced. Furthermore, the majority of the women insisted that it would not be easy to do away with the mourning practice as it was observed, practiced and respected by their mothers, no matter what challenges they encounter. This shows that upbringing and socialization also contribute and influence people significantly towards their own plight. The ultimate consequence is that women’s oppression and gender discrimination

continue to prevail. Notably, certain practices are observed, taught and internalized in such a way that they are made to be accepted as part of the individual's culture.

It was evident from almost all the participants that KwaNyuswa community people highly sanction gender discrimination given its patriarchal nature. Radical feminism views patriarchy as a dividing power, primarily by gender, and as a result oppresses women and privileges men (Willis and Ellen, 1984:117). Therefore, raising the consciousness of patriarchal communities like KwaNyuswa, needs to be initiated towards gender equality and gender transformation in order to entirely eradicate the plight of women.

5.3.2 Gender discrimination caused by stereotypes

By employing radical feminism as a theoretical framework for this study, the oppressive gender discriminatory practices inherent in culture were exposed. The findings from almost all the participants revealed that the *ilobolo* practice is one of those cultural practices which perpetuate gender discrimination. *Ilobolo* is used to justify men's superiority and women's submissiveness and as such maintains women's oppression and sanctions men's power. This emerged from the men's responses when they boastfully emphasized the significance of mourning by the women just because they have paid *ilobolo* for them. Thus, it goes without saying that *ilobolo* contributes enormously towards women oppression and gender discrimination. It gives men all the rights whilst the women are stripped off all their freedom and rights. Notably, therefore, *ilobolo* widens the gap between men and women thereby placing the women in a sub-ordinate position by compelling them to mourn for their husbands regardless of the obstacles and challenges they experience in the practice of this cultural ritual. It is believed that women should comply with traditional customs prescribed for them in the recognition and maintenance of erroneous belief that men are superior to them.

The analysis of the data indicates that religious denominations also influence the mourning cultural practice, often in a discriminatory and oppressive way. Widows are subjected to more restrictions than widowers and this contributes towards gender inequality. One of the widows indicated that it is their church belief that widows should be identified by the mourning dress for them to be respected by the community. Ironically, widowers do not observe any of these practices. Mkhwanazi (2010:14) argues that the mourning dress does

not give any respect to the widows. Instead, it invites men to propose love. This argument was supported by one of the church leaders. He noted that there were instances of widows being attacked and raped while still in mourning dresses. This indicates that the wearing of the mourning dress does not always serve its intended purpose. On the contrary, it constrains widows and emphasizes the patriarchal nature of rural societies.

5.3.3 Stigma, intimidation and attitudes

Although the majority of the participants in this study were in favour of the mourning cultural practice which includes the wearing of the mourning dress, most of the responses indicated that this cultural practice significantly involves gender discrimination against and abuse towards women as the widows get intimidated in different ways by the people around them. Radical feminism helped by shedding light on how women are oppressed through patriarchal beliefs, as the participants indicated the fact that they avoid mixing themselves with widows while they are in the mourning dress because of the belief that they carry darkness with which they might contaminate them. Others conceded that although the mourning practice is one of the significant cultural practices, it constrains and overburdens the widows' lives. The widows also indicated that they experience numerous challenges and discrimination during their mourning period, especially while they are still in the mourning dress, where they are ostracized by their in-laws, neighbours, community members and even by their friends. As a consequence, they become very much stressed and isolated. These instances show how much gender discrimination is embedded in cultural practices because what is prescribed and happening to widows does not apply or happen to the widowers.

5.4 Summary of the findings

In the African culture, patriarchal practices shape and perpetuate gender inequality. These cultural practices have been incorporated into religion, and ultimately believed, adopted and accepted as a natural endowment. It has also been revealed by the literature reviewed that these cultural practices are mainly emphasized for women than for men. Radical feminists argue that culture imprisons women thus leading to their subordination because of the patriarchal nature of societies. The participants' responses revealed that the traditional nature of KwaNyaswa community is the main cause and the reason for the ill-treatment of women or widows. Gender stereotyping together with the women's upbringing have created a mindset which is submissive towards men. The main argument in this study was that Zulu cultural practices perpetuate gender inequality and subordination of women to the extent that

women do not have control over their lives nor enjoy their human rights. Insights from radical feminism were used to explain how patriarchal ideology impacts negatively towards women in the rural areas. It became evident from this study that women feel obliged to comply with whatever is termed “cultural practice”. If they do not comply, they are criticized, cursed or insulted by their families and the community at large.

Despite all the efforts made to transform the African people and to challenge the subjection of women, oppressive cultural practices are still highly recognized and practiced in traditional societies like KwaNyaswa. The interviews conducted with the Zulu people of KwaNyaswa revealed that most of them are very much conservative and stereotyped. They strongly believe in the superiority of men. Even though the people of this community are generally aware of the challenges, hardship and intimidation that are experienced by the widows, their perceptions are influenced by patriarchal ideology which characteristically perpetuates gender discrimination.

Out of 21 males and female participants from 55 years and above, 17 were in favour of the idea that widows must observe the mourning cultural practice, including the wearing of the mourning dress which should be used at least for a period of six months. And out of 9 participants from 54 years of age and below were against the idea of using the mourning dresses. They argued that there is no need to symbolize this mourning practice. Widows should only mourn with their hearts and respect themselves for that particular period. Thereafter, life should go on as usual. They emphasize that, if mourning was meant to be symbolized, the widowers too should follow suit.

It has been revealed in this study that the rural people, in this case the people of KwaNyaswa, do not consider social transformation or gender equality as processes which should change their traditional beliefs. They strongly adhere to patriarchal practices as they believe that they inform their identity as well as their sense of belonging. Radical feminism has guided this study and shed light on the fact that patriarchal societies treat women differently from men, and that the Zulu widows are discriminated against in all spheres of their lives. This was evident from the findings of this study and it was also revealed that there is still a long way to go to establish gender equality in the rural areas like KwaNyaswa as a case in point.

CHAPTER 6

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This study explored the plight of widows in the KwaNyuswa community. The objective was to establish the challenges these widows experience during their mourning period. This was aimed at exposing the gender inequalities embedded in the mourning cultural practice, and determine how people of this community perceive the mourning cultural practices. The radical feminist perspective was employed as the theoretical framework to guide this study. The ultimate aim of this study is to make a contribution towards the eradication of patriarchal ideology which constrains the widows' lives and to transform and develop a shift in the mindset amongst the people in rural areas such as KwaNyuswa. This chapter presents the limitations and recommendations of the study, proposal for further research and the conclusion.

6.2 Limitations of the study

Due to the patriarchal nature of the KwaNyuswa community and the sensitive nature of this study, it was not easy for me to convince the people to participate in the study. As a result 15% of the targeted participants did not avail themselves. The widows were fearful of their families, therefore I had to explain the purpose of the study and reassure them about anonymity in the study. Although this study was based at the KwaNyuswa community with a small sample, the findings, however, can be generalized for the entire community of KwaNyuswa and probably for other KwaZulu-Natal rural areas.

6.3 Recommendations of the study

This study has shown that the mourning cultural practice perpetuates gender inequality as it allows men domination and women subordination. Therefore, this practice needs to be revisited and it calls for (re)transformation and re-socialization of the Zulu societies, especially in the rural areas. All those who are involved in the traditional structures or community development structures should highlight how culture sustains the gap between men and women in terms of human power relations.

Pereira and Souza (2002: 54) caution that:

Feminism is more than a struggle to do away with male dominance. It is also about transforming what goes on in the mind of women and men about asking different kinds of questions that will require new conceptualization.

Mathonsi (2006:44) observes that “women’s roles are transforming and they are no longer confined in the house or in the kitchen. Women are now claiming space and roles in society.” In light of the sentiments expressed in the aforementioned quotes, the African people, especially in the rural areas, need to be informed and taught about gender transformation. Support groups for women should be organized where they will be informed and educated about their rights. There should be a conscious move towards making rural women understand that culture imprisons them. The majority of these women have accepted the oppressive status quo to the extent that they value male domination instead of valuing themselves.

In a rural area like KwaNyuswa, gender equity and equality should be promoted. Parents can play a very important role by teaching their children about gender equality. The home is the main social transformational institution. Therefore, if gender transformation could start in the family, gender discrimination can be easily eliminated. Gender transformation as well as social transformation programmes should be put in place by community developers. For example, media like Ukhozi FM and others can introduce gender sensitive programmes, aimed at eradicating gender stereotypes in order to change the mindset of the people in the rural areas. Professional people like social workers and psychologists need to avail themselves in the rural areas to give support to the widows in managing their plight. Public awareness of the condition of widows and public actions both to prod the state into positive action and to encourage the full participation of widows in public life can pave the way towards gender justice with or without men.

This study recommends that the traditional societies must eradicate those cultural practices which oppress women/widows and preserve those which are free of gender discrimination. The aim of this study was to investigate the conditions accounting for women and or widows’ oppression, especially in the rural areas and to emphasize the need for gender equality and freedom from discrimination as sanctioned in the Bill of Rights to the effect that people must enjoy equal status and be treated equally and fairly without discrimination and oppression

based on gender. Gender transformation campaigns must be organized, especially in the rural areas, to change the people's mindset.

It eventually dawned to me that justice would not have been done in the study if I were depart from the research area without having explored the possibility of establishing support structures where women could be referred to for assistance pertaining to their abuse. These envisaged structures would be places where they could either find help or wherein they could express their frustrations or take their matters further. Somehow, this led to some of the ideas under the recommendations. Kumalo (2011:06) points out that: "empowering women is not just a political matter as it seems to be celebrated. Rather, it is a multifaceted challenge incorporating religion, culture, and many more". The following is the list of parties or bodies where women can be assisted, empowered or developed in different situations:

- (a) An NGO type – a Non Governmental Organization which is driven by a well established NGO like Vuleka Trust, Agenda, Legal Resources Centre (LRC)
- (b) Government – these can be an avenue that explores existing government institutions like SAPS, Department of Justice and Correctional Services (restorative justice)
- (c) Chapter 9 Institution – Human Rights Commission, Commission on Language and Culture
- (d) Private sector – funded and/ supported by a private company or work place setting where widowed women are given professional counseling and support
- (e) Traditional – a structure that is rooted and informed by cultural and customary laws. This can be led and supported by traditional structures like AmaKhosi, Ondlunkulu, Izinduna and Amaphoyisa ezinduna
- (f) Community based – an organization that becomes a locally based structure which reports and supports widowed women. This could be a structure that is at a root level. Such a structure would be there as and when things happen and process. Lifeline support that can be found and utilized on site walking with survivors and families, children, etc.
- (g) Or self managed support system particularly led by women, thereby empowering women to start taking change of their own course and plight.

The above ideas could possibly provide a holistic approach in providing women with awareness and protection of their status. Moreover, such structures could assist women with mental, spiritual, physical and psychological help. What is needed is an empowering platform for women which can be utilized even in other places as a model of transformation.

6.4 Concluding remarks

This section serves to establish whether the aims and objectives of the study have been met and whether the research questions have been answered. Using the radical feminist perspective as the theoretical framework of this study, the main aims were to investigate gender related issues embedded in the mourning cultural practice, to establish the experiences of the Zulu widows during their mourning period and to explore how the people of KwaNyuswa community perceive the mourning cultural practice.

The research questions were answered by using the qualitative data collecting methods which included: unstructured interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation, and the purpose and objectives of the study were thus achieved. The qualitative data was analysed successfully by using the interpretive thematic analysis. The study has shown that despite the existence of legislations passed by the newly emerged democratic government to address gender equality with the aim of empowering women, improve their situation and to eradicate gender discrimination, the women in the rural areas still face difficulties as they remain the keepers of tradition. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the people at KwaNyuswa consider the mourning cultural practice as an integral part of their lives, regardless of the limitations or oppression it has on the women so affected.

This study has established the following:

- (a) The widows at KwaNyuswa are subject to practices which constitute gender discrimination.
- (b) The community and church leaders concur that widows are treated differently to the widowers.
- (c) Most of the people interviewed and the social commentators indicated that some of the cultural practices related to mourning need to be stopped.

Therefore, further study in other rural areas is needed to determine if similar views exist. In the light of the above, it can be concluded that the Zulu widows are oppressed. The mourning cultural practice and *ilobolo* have been identified in this study as major contributory factors perpetuating gender discrimination.

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Nkosi, N. Ukhozi FM. Woza Nabangani Bakho: 12 September 2012. *16h30 -17h30*.

APPENDIX ONE

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS

No.	Participants Id. Codes	Age	Sex	District	Religious	Marital Status	Level of Edu	Occupation
1	WW 1	63	F	Mathabethu	Zion	W	None	Pensioner
2	MW1	49	F	Mathabethu	St Johns	M	Std 5	Domestic
3	MW2	58	F	Ezitholeni	Zion	M	Std 4	Domestic
4	MW3	59	F	Ezitholeni	Nazareth	M	Std 3	H/wife
5	SW1	30	F	Shelela	Zion	S	Std 5	Domestic
6	WW2	57	F	Shelela	Nazareth	W	Std 3	H/wife
7	MW4	59	F	Umngeni	Rman C.	W	None	H/wife
8	MW5	49	F	Umngeni	Roman C.	M	Std 5	H/wife
9	WM3	54	F	Mathabethu	Lehanyana	W	Std 5	H/wife
10	MW6	65	F	Mathabethu	Nazareth	M	None	H/wife
11	SW2	38	F	Ezitholeni	Nazareth	S	Std 5	Domestic
12	WM4	62	F	Ezitholeni	Roman C	W	None	Pensioner
13	SW3	52	F	Shelela	Zion	S	Std 3	H/wife
14	WW5	60	F	Shelela	St Johns	W	None	Pensioner
15	MW7	59	F	Umngeni	Lehanyana	W	Std5	Domestic
16	WW6	65	F	Sidanga	Nazareth	W	None	Pensioner
17	CL1	60	M	Mathabethu	Nazareth	M	None	Church Id
18	WM1	60	M	Ezitholeni	Nazareth	W	None	Pensioner
19	CL2	65	M	Ezitholeni	St Johns	M	None	Church Id
20	SM1	48	M	Shelela	Roman C	S	Std 4	Working
21	CL3	64	M	Shelela	Zion	M	None	Church Id
22	WM2	60	M	Umngeni	St Johns	W	None	Working
23	HM1	65	M	Sidanga	Zion	W	None	Headman
24	SM2	49	M	Sidanga	Zion	S	Std 5	Working
25	HM2	60	M	Mathabethu	Nazareth	M	None	Headman
26	MM1	49	M	Ezitholeni	St Johns	M	Std 4	Working
27	SM3	48	M	Ezitholeni	Nazareth	S	Std 5	Working
28	WM3	59	M	Shelela	Zion	W	Std 2	Working
29	HM3	65	M	Umngeni	Nazareth	M	None	Headman
30	CL4	60	M	Sidanga	Roman	S	Std 4	Church Id

APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANTS: (Headmen and church leaders)

- How do you interpret death in your religion / community?
- Are there any death rituals strictly followed in your community?
- Do you believe in mourning cultural practice in your church/ community?
- What is the significance of mourning cultural practice?
- How do the widows and widowers observe mourning cultural practice?
- In your opinion, is the observation of mourning cultural practice gender balanced?
- Do you consider an issue of gender balance in your church/ community?
- Do you think the widows in your church/ community are fairly treated?
- In your opinion, does mourning cultural practice still relevant in nowadays?
- Do you recommend gender and social transformation in your church / community?
If yes, how do you do it? If not, why?

QUESTIONS FOR MEN AND WOMEN: (Focus group discussions)

- What do you understand about death?
- What is the significance of mourning cultural practice?
- Who is responsible to observe the mourning cultural practice?
- How do the widows and widowers of KwaNyuswa observe the mourning cultural practice?
- Why do they observe the way they do?
- What are your perceptions regarding gender equality applied in this cultural practice?
- How is the attitude of community towards widows and widowers?
- Do you think the widows and widowers in your community have equal rights?
- In your opinion, do you think the widows are fairly treated?
- What challenges do you think the widows experience during their mourning period?
- What can be done to normalize the situation of widows?
- What do you think can be done to transform gender inequality in this community?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS: (Individual interviews)

- What do you understand about death?
- What do you understand about the mourning cultural practice?
- What is the significance of mourning cultural practice?
- Did you observe any mourning cultural practices when your husband/wife passed on? If yes how did you go about it? And why?
- Do you think the widows and widowers in your community have equal rights?
- Do you think mourning cultural practices are relevant in nowadays lifestyle?
- What is your opinion regarding gender equality in this cultural practice?
- Could you tell me about your experiences of being a widow / widower?
- What do you think can be done to transform gender inequality in your community?