

**Fourteen years on : The legacy of giving testimony to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission for survivors of human rights violations**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

**OBJECTIVES:** This study focused, unusually, on the experience of people who gave testimony in person to the TRC many years previously. The study's objectives were firstly to explore the personal, social and political events that participants recounted as motivating them to testify to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and secondly to analyse the meanings that participants gave retrospectively, about fourteen years later, to testifying before the TRC.

**METHOD:** 30 participants were recruited, from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, in Gauteng and Western Cape provinces, South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in participants' preferred SA languages. Data were analysed using principles of modified grounded theory.

**FINDINGS:** Participants from the two provinces testified through shared hopes for change but differed in the specific political and violent events that they wished to make public. Looking back, many participants expressed disillusionment with the TRC's effectiveness. Participants were concerned by unfulfilled promises, inadequate reparations and lack of socioeconomic improvement. Memories of horrific abuses were still vivid, and most doubted that the TRC process could result in forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing. Participants felt unacknowledged, invalidated and inadequately recompensed, symbolically and monetarily. Nonetheless, participants expressed suspended hope, if not for themselves but for the future generations. 'Misrecognition' emerged as the overarching theme, an experience of feeling ignored and dismissed, finding promises for material recompense broken, and their contribution to the seemingly successful TRC processes not recognised.

**CONCLUSION:** The TRC process neglected the abuse of the apartheid period, which has left a legacy. This study has shown that many participants continue to struggle with the legacy of a very unequal society, and further follow-up research is vital to review participants' long-term needs. Lack of improvement in social and economic conditions has led some people in South Africa to question the effectiveness of the TRC.

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## Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BiH	Bosnia-Herzegovina
CSVr	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DG	Disability Grant
EFI	Enright Forgiveness Inventory
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNR	Government of National Reconciliation
GNU	Government of National Unity
GTM	grounded theory method
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	International Criminal Tribunal
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NP	National Party
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
SA	South Africa
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADF	South African Defence Force
SHSSC	School of Health Sciences and Social Care
SP	Special Pension
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	United Democratic Front
UP	United Party

# **Chapter 1      Introduction**

This chapter highlights the historical and socio-political nature of South Africa (SA) during apartheid and later how the South African government dealt with the inevitability of political transformation following the transfer of power by the National Party (NP) to the African National Congress (ANC).

The chapter provides a background to how the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) addressed issues arising from creating a space for victims and perpetrators to meet face to face, in public, and to share their experiences of being victims and/or perpetrators of serious human rights violations. This was done with the hope of obtaining the truth regarding the nature and extent of the atrocities perpetrated during the apartheid era and hopefully achieving reconciliation and eventually psychological wellbeing.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first is concerned with the focus of the research, which includes the rationale for the project. The second section deals with the context of the study and includes demographic details, the history of apartheid and a background to the political conflicts that facilitated a change of government. The third section deals with the background history to the TRC, offers brief comparisons with five other, less prominent truth commissions in Africa, including the reasons behind the creation of the TRC. The fourth section introduces the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

## **1.1    The focus of this research project**

This research project has explored reflections on the psycho-social consequences and potential long-term impact for victims and survivors of human rights violations of providing testimony to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The study is unusual in gathering these reflections about 14 years after the participants originally gave their testimony, in order to explore the longer-term meanings of this experience. The TRC was created under the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995) and was the fifteenth of the 21 commissions so far set up. It was established to



facilitate a peaceful handover of power from the apartheid NP to the new government of the ANC.

The specific research objectives of this study are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. In brief, they are:

- to explore the multiple personal, social and political events that led participants to testify to the TRC;
- to analyse the participants' reported consequences of testifying before the TRC;
- to describe and understand the experiences of the survivors' preparation for appearing before the TRC;
- to analyse the extent to which appearing before the TRC impacted on the wellbeing of survivors of human rights violations in the long term;
- to explore the participants' experiences of forgiveness, reconciliation, amnesty and healing.

For the purposes of this study, the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' will be used interchangeably. This was specifically requested by the members of the Khulumani support group who took part in this study. They stated that they preferred to be referred to as survivors rather than as victims. (This will be described further in Chapter 3.)

There has been some limited previous research into the psycho-social consequences of giving testimony to the TRC (e.g. De la Rey & Owens, 1998; Hamber et al., 2000; Stein et al., 2008), as will be reviewed in Chapter 2. Within this research, however, there are few long-term follow-up studies of the victims of gross human rights violations who have given testimony. Many optimistic assumptions have been made about the forgiveness and healing that can be achieved through providing victim impact statements, and these assumptions require critical examination, especially given the increasing recourse to similar reconciliation processes at the end of civil war in other countries (Kalayjian & Paloutzian, 2009; Moon, 2009).

### **1.1.1 Philosophical perspectives**

In qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge their own role and presence within the research (Finlay & Gough, 2008). They should remain reflexive

and self-aware, mindful of how 'the researcher's background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impacts on the research process' (Finlay & Gough, 2008: ix). As the highly significant political events of 1995 unfolded and the transfer of power to the ANC began, some of the country's stalwarts were living outside SA even though the banning of political exiles had already been lifted. Belonging to this group of South Africans still living abroad, I personally felt bereft of the opportunity of being part of events of such historic proportions. So I decided to embark on a study that would help me to learn in depth about the reconciliation processes that were being attempted during that period of transition, and whether presenting to the TRC had any positive effects on the mental health of victims/survivors. My skills and professional background as a social worker provided a basis for interest in the effects that the TRC process had on the wellbeing of victims who had presented before it many years previously, from their own perspectives.

I had already engaged in a feasibility study in 2005 where I was introduced to about ten participants who were all members of the Khulumani Support Group. The Khulumani Support Group is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has provided emotional and practical support to its members, who were defined as 'victims of human rights violations' under the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act. This group supported these victims/survivors throughout the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by helping them to write and submit statements regarding the atrocities they suffered under the apartheid system. It assisted victims/survivors in presenting their stories to the TRC and by extension to the world through media such as television and radio broadcasts. This early collaborative exercise helped me to refine my focus and confirmed the worth of the project.

In all research, especially qualitative research, the researcher has to acknowledge their 'lens', or personal, professional or academic perspective (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Holloway & Biley, 2011; Maxwell, 2004, cited by Willig, 2008). Having been born and bred during the 1950s in apartheid South Africa, my perception of the world and my experience were always going to be influenced and shaped by an emancipatory approach (in addition to the Ubuntu worldview, which is an African way of thinking that will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3). Growing up under an oppressive government requires attempts at adapting, negotiating and manoeuvring within such a system and eventually trying to counteract its effects. This was going to need a critical and

revolutionary perspective, such as the emancipatory approach. I spent a lot of my time as a youngster and as a young adult at university being involved in political movements which were at pains to address the critical issues of apartheid's brutality towards the country's black population. Amongst the liberation movements that were at the forefront of the black struggles in SA, the emancipatory approach was and still is seen as relevant for all those people seeking to empower themselves and bring about broader social changes to their circumstances (Beresford & Evans 1999).

Basic to the critical theorist is the belief in constructed lived experiences that are mediated by power relations within social and historical contexts (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; cited in Ponterotto, 2005). This is highly relevant to the situation in SA, in that the victims of human rights violations needed to be involved directly in emancipating themselves. As Ponterotto argues, 'equally central to critical theory is the emphasis on dialectical interaction leading to emancipation (from oppression) and a more egalitarian and democratic social order' (Ponterotto, 2005: 130). By bringing victims of human rights violations and perpetrators together on the same platform, I believe that the TRC was attempting to engage oppressed black South Africans and the oppressors (perpetrators) in collective democratic theorising about their common and different perceptions of oppression and privilege.

A more pragmatic approach within the liberation movements in the country, and one very closely allied to the emancipatory approach, was adopted by the black consciousness movement. Headed by the late Bantu Steven Biko, this motivated black SA to be masters of their own destinies, to be proud of themselves and aim to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. This movement not only conscientised black South Africans but also helped people become actively involved in transforming their own livelihoods by engaging them in community programmes that were geared towards self-reliance, in line with what Paulo Freire advocated in Chile. Though it took its inspiration from Black theology and Black power in the USA and from the challenging writings of Franz Fanon in Algeria, the aim of black consciousness, as Gerhart expressed so well, 'was not to trigger a spontaneous Fanonesque eruption of the masses into violent action but rather to rebuild and recondition the mind of the oppressed in such a way that they would be ready forcefully to demand what was rightly theirs' (Gerhart 1978: 221).

The main interpretative contributors to this study are therefore critical and feminist theories. Critical theories are important because the research draws on Marxist assumptions about social relations, although it is not bounded by any single grand theoretical perspective (Harvey 2001). At the heart of Marxist theory is the idea that knowledge is structured by existing sets of social relations, and it aims to challenge prevailing, oppressive social structures. 'Emancipatory reasoning does not struggle with common sense but with social reality that underlies it' (Harvey, 1990: p12). Similarly, according to Harvey (1990: 22), knowledge is not only about finding out about the world; attention must be paid to the production of knowledge, and to changing it. He calls this emancipatory notion of praxis 'practical reflective activity'. This rings true in my practice as a reflective social worker who is concerned about social justice.

Gilgun & Abrams (2002: 40) argue that Denzin, a sociologist and one of the leading qualitative methodologists of our day, has a long-term interest in many of the values and perspectives that social workers espouse. They maintain that Denzin, in his writings, seeks to change how social scientists, social workers included, think about and do research, so that applied, emancipatory, feminist, ethnically rooted and culturally based pluralistic perspectives become mainstream in the social sciences. As such, he has shared with the social work profession ideas and a language that will advance the agendas of social justice and social change. Social work and social work research are inherently critical in terms of values, with 'critical' being defined as concerned with the promotion of social justice, equality, emancipation, empowerment and level playing fields as well as with the exposing and undermining abusive uses of power, privilege and prestige (Gilgun & Abrams, 2000).

Even though this study is not emancipatory, I feel that it is important to mention the contribution made by feminist work to the emancipation not only of women, but of marginalised people such as the victims/survivors of human rights violations in SA. The emancipatory approach is closely allied to feminist work which aims to create knowledge that will improve the position of women in societies. It therefore fitted very well with my research, as most of the participants in my sample were women of older ages and who were left to look after and care for their children and grandchildren following the untimely killings of their husbands and children in the struggle for political emancipation.

These women were referred to by the TRC as 'indirect victims', as they testified mainly on behalf of their deceased husbands, children and /or friends.

It has been important for these women to be aware of the harsh realities of their existence in a society that did not exalt the position of women, at home and at work, in terms of the power of patriarchy, and particularly of black women, in terms of racism. Of most significance is my argument that the new dispensation of the ANC has dealt with the specifics of women's involvement in the political field as well as their contributions to the liberation of, in particular, black women. As a member of a profession concerned with social justice and with ideas of empowering people, I find that recent debates within the social sciences on the shortcomings of social constructionism and the attempt to overcome them through a critical realist position have so far failed to capture social work's attention. In the UK so far, apart from a flirtation with Marxism, social work has historically associated itself with 'a particular paradigm of sociology that was pragmatic, apolitical and disinclined to challenge existing social structures' (Lorenz, 1994; cited in Houston 2001: 845).

Bhakar's critical realist perspective (1978) is relevant here (as discussed by Houston, 2001), as it charts a radical alternative to the relativism inherent within the social constructivism and considers its relevance for emancipatory forms of practice. It has been argued that Bhakar's project has significance for social work because it addresses the 'structures' which determine, constrain and oppress our activities (Houston 2001: 845). Thus by offering an explanation of the structural impediments to human development, it facilitates progress that leads to the emancipatory transformation of those structures (O'Neill, 1999: 13), cited in Houston (2001). The necessity of this approach cannot be overstated for, as Crompton and Gubbay argue: *'the many and complex problems of today's world cannot be explained without recourse to social theory – a theory which explains why appearances take the form they do, a theory which reveals the underlying factors, or structure on which are built the complex realities of everyday life'* (Crompton & Gubbay, 1977: 4).

Whilst social work is essentially a socially constructed activity, Payne (1997) describes how, under conditions of postmodernity, the social world should embrace a reflexive mode, taking account of occupational expectations and client influence. Human subjectivity, meaning and the need for an interpretative approach, which these

perspectives have rightly underscored, are fundamental to social work but we also need to take into account the role of 'structure' in shaping social meaning. As Butt and Parton (2005: 93) argue, 'The need to recognise the views and experience of those with whom practitioners are working is seen as central if its attempts to contribute towards emancipation are to be realised.'

On the other hand, for Fanon, the African experience of resistance required African voices that spoke the truth about African experiences (DeReef, 2010). This was the case even though in SA, as a result of the negotiated settlement, the experience is not only about the black South Africans, but also involves white South Africans in transforming the effects of and dealing with the human rights violations perpetrated under apartheid. According to Archbishop Tutu, chair of the TRC, the Commission 'would practise neither impunity nor vengeance' (quoted in Mamdani, 2005: 33). The Commission intended to avoid the failings of previous commissions, being determined to address both victims and perpetrators, and not just one or the other.

Throughout my research, as an insider/outsider researcher I would be partly embedded (as a South African who had some experience of apartheid injustice) in the world of these participants. This 'embeddedness' is a central principle which requires transparency on my part in declaring my position in relation to the research process. To do this I have used 'reflexivity' to ground me deeply in this research as, although I am aware of my privilege in having skills and expertise as a researcher as well as a professional practitioner, I intended to help co-construct realities between the participants and myself (Finlay, 1998; Pillow, 2003; Willig, 2008; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

I discuss reflexivity in more detail in Chapter 3 and will show that, by keeping reflexive journals from the very beginning, the thread of reflexivity has run through and informed the entire research process.

I cannot discuss the processes of the TRC without touching on a human rights perspective, since the TRC was set up primarily as a result of human rights violations. As Moon (2009) contends: 'Since the advent of the SA TRC, a therapeutic moral order has become one of the most powerful frameworks of understanding within which an increasing number of new states have attempted to deal with the legacy of violent conflict' (Moon, 2009: 71). My study will therefore be exploring if and how the TRC has

made it possible for victims/survivors of HRV to experience therapeutic wellbeing following their involvement in and co-operation with the processes of the TRC. However, central to SA's democratic transformation have been attempts to understand how and why human rights abuses were common under apartheid.

Human rights are those rights to which persons are entitled simply by virtue of their being human beings. Fundamental rights are those rights which are primary and supersede all others. They are required of all persons in order to fulfil their basic humanness and therefore 'essential to life worthy of a human being' (Donnelly, 1985: 9) According to Gewirth (1978) the right to freedom entails the right of individuals to act as they wish without interference from others, including the state. 'The only limitation on such action is that it does not threaten or violate other persons' rights to freedom, (by coercing them) or to wellbeing (by harming them)' (Gewirth, 1978: 17).

The South African TRC focused on rights termed 'bodily integrity rights', which include the right to life, the right to be free from torture and from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, and the right to freedom from abduction and arbitrary and prolonged detention. These rights are preserved in the new South African constitution and under international law, and violations of such rights are 'inhuman acts of a very serious nature', according to (Mertus 2000; 175).

It is recognised that the whole of apartheid's machinery was a crime against humanity and defined all aspects of people's existence. However, the TRC was limited to investigating 'gross human rights violations' as defined by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act. This study recognises the limitation of this decision. However, human rights issues will be dealt with in greater detail in section 1.2.3.

## **1.2 The context of the study**

### **1.2.1 The populations of South Africa**

South Africa is a country of about 50 million people, of whom nearly 80 per cent are Africans. Nearly 10 per cent of the population are so-called 'coloured' people (who are of mixed lineage) and a similar percentage are white people. The white population itself comprises subgroups: namely, Afrikaners, who have descended from Dutch, German and French Huguenot immigrants arriving in the seventeenth century; English-speakers,

descending from British settlers largely arriving in the late eighteenth century; and other immigrants from Europe. A very small percentage are of Indian, Asian or other descent (<http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/population.htm>). Since 1994 the country has had 11 recognised official languages. The divisions within it are so great that to call it a single country can be considered more a pious hope than a statement of fact (Ross, 1999). It is widely known that the various population groups within South Africa have not lived together in harmony or equity, and this will be explored later in this chapter.

### **1.2.2 Apartheid in South Africa**

South Africa was notorious for its strict enforcement of apartheid until 17 June 1991, when its Parliament voted to repeal the relevant laws. The implementation of apartheid is closely related to the violation of human rights experienced by black South Africans, and hence needs to be described in some detail here.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines 'apartheid' as 'a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race'. Literally translated, *apartheid* means 'the state of being apart'. However, in practice, *apartheid* is the Afrikaans word for a system of racial segregation enforced through legislation by the National Party, which was the ruling party of SA from 1948 to 1994, under which the rights of the majority black inhabitants of were curtailed and white supremacy and Afrikaner minority rule was maintained. When trying to justify its existence, former South African president P. W. Botha described apartheid as 'good neighbourliness' (Jeeves 1995), a phraseology that excluded the majority of the population from sharing the wealth of the country (Ross (1999).

During Botha's premiership, apartheid became the most notorious form of racial domination that the post-war world has known. To support this assertion, Ross (1999) reported that the NP went into the election of 1948 with two contradictory visions of apartheid in its programmatic documents. One vision was espoused by those who wished to bring about a full dissociation between whites and Africans: in other words, to brake and reverse the process whereby SA had become an integrated country. On the other hand, according to Ross (1999), the white farmers who had switched over to the NP in order to be assured of disciplined and cheap black labour were not going to forgo



that reward; nor were the industrialists, especially those who had set up with the aid of Afrikaner capital. The task of reconciling and advancing these two contradictory notions fell into the lap of Hendrick Verwoerd, prime minister of SA between 1958 and 1966. Verwoerd was a man with a glittering career as a psychologist and philosopher and in private life was described as a charming man; however, in public affairs, he was dogmatic, intolerant, domineering and xenophobic (Beinart, 1994; Davenport & Saunders, 2000).

Under Verwoerd, the NP 'applied apartheid in a plethora of laws and executive actions' (Thompson, 2001: 190). At the heart of the apartheid system was four ideas. First, the population of SA was held to consist of four racial groups – whites, coloureds, Indians and Africans – each with its own assumed inherent culture. Second, whites, as the 'civilised' race, were viewed as entitled to have absolute control over the state. Third, it was accepted that white interests should prevail over black interests – the state was not obliged to provide equal facilities for the 'subordinate' races. Fourth, the white racial group was viewed as a single nation, with Afrikaans- and English-speaking components, whilst Africans were positioned as belonging to several (eventually ten) distinct nations or potential nations. This formula made the white 'nation' the largest in the country and was a precursor to the infamous Homelands Act (see below). Soon after coming into power in 1948, the government began to give effect to these ideas. Apartheid also included increasingly sophisticated controls over all black South Africans (Worden, 2011).

Ross (1999: 116) argues that 'whatever apartheid meant, and this was not yet clear, it certainly entailed the recognition and the separation of specific groups of people'. He explains that the criteria by which these were demarcated were not racist, at least not in the formal sense of the word. Of course, there was, he concedes, an undertone of intense racism within apartheid, but in strict theory the NP ideologues always emphasised the importance of ethnicity, seeing the various nations of SA as God-created entities, on the model of their own self-image of Afrikanerdom. In order to preserve this in all its purity, several laws were passed, including the Population Registration Act (1950), which designated the racial category of every person, the Mixed Marriage Act (1949), the application of which led to the breaking up of homes and families, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1950),

which created legal boundaries between the races by making marriage and sexual relations illegal across the colour line, and the Homelands Act (1951), which relegated Africans to areas far away from towns or cities, thus denying them the right of access to jobs. These laws were to remain the mainstay of the Nationalist Party, a 'bible' by which different nationalities were separated from each other for decades.

Thompson (2001) argues that this legislative framework foreshadowed by Verwoerd was completed in 1971, when the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act empowered the government to grant independence to any homeland. Government propaganda likened this process to the contemporaneous decolonisation of the European empires in tropical Africa (Terreblanche, 2002; Worden, 2011). Thompson comments thus: 'the term *apartheid* soon developed from a political slogan into a drastic, systematic programme of social engineering' (Thompson, 2001: 189).

### **1.2.3 The background to conflict and human rights violations in South Africa**

South Africa during apartheid was a country of many divisions: a country torn by strife, conflicts and violent crimes against humanity, divided along the lines of colour, creed and race (Worden, 2011).

Thompson (2001) and others (Davenport & Saunders, 2000; Ross, 1999; Waldmeir, 1997; Beinart, 1994; De Kiewiet, 1942) have set out the history of SA from the time the white settlers invaded and began to colonise the area. This history started with the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in 1652 when he established a colony at the Cape of Good Hope to serve as a shipping port for the Dutch East India Company. However, with the consolidation of the interests of the white population over the black communities by the 1910 Union of South Africa, the country became a 'powerful settler state', with white people ruling the country and especially the black population with an iron fist, using a plethora of stringent and repressive measures (Deegan, 2001: 3; Thompson, 2001; Ross, 1999 ; Waldmier, 1997; Maylam, 1986).

After obtaining South African independence from British rule in 1948, the NP consolidated its power. According to Thompson (2001: 187), within that year it created new parliamentary seats for representatives of white voters in South West Africa, now

Namibia (six in the House of Assembly and four in the Senate), who were elected to support the government. Step by step the NP eliminated every vestige of black participation in the central political system. By 1956, after a long political and legal battle, it dealt the coloured voters in the Cape Province, most of whom had supported the United Party (UP), the same blow as the Hertzog government had dealt the African voters in 1936: that is, it placed them on a separate roll and gave them the right to elect whites to represent them in Parliament. Fourteen years later it abolished these white representatives of both African and 'coloured' voters (Thompson, 2001; Davenport & Saunders, 2000; Ross, 1999).

Whilst industrialised growth continued apace, the problem of 'poor whites' was virtually eliminated and the living standards of the white population rose steadily. Africans, coloureds and Indians, on the other hand, continued to live in artificially induced poverty and squalor. The massive reorganisation of South African society envisaged in the government's apartheid's programme caused disruption and suffering for thousands of people.

However, by 1978 the apartheid state was in trouble. South Africa's economic boom of the 1960s and early 1970s had been followed by a sharp recession. The administration of the complex network of apartheid laws was proving to be extremely costly. Inflation was running at over 10 per cent, the increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) was scarcely keeping up with the increase in population, and many whites were becoming poorer. With high unemployment and escalating crime, vigorous resistance and lawlessness in the townships, the apartheid system had no option but to declare a state of emergency and to start to negotiate with leaders of black groups, most of whom were still banned and/or in exile (Thompson, 2001). Beinart declared that 'the erosion of the state has been attended by increasing disorder and crime and that any successor government which emerges from this uncomfortable interregnum will inherit a difficult legacy' (Beinart, 1994: 236). This was a warning for the ANC organisation waiting to take over.

Whereas in 1960 and 1961 the government had successfully imposed its version of law and order for the next decade by arresting and banning black organisations and engaging in a massacre of 69 Sharpeville demonstrators against pass laws (including eight women and ten children), similar actions in 1976 and 1977 failed to have the same

effect (Frankel, 2001). Black resistance had become more formidable than before. After the Soweto uprisings in 1976, a protest culture pervaded the black population of South Africa. Students and workers, children and adults, men and women, the educated and uneducated, became involved in efforts to liberate the country from apartheid. Poets, novelists, dramatists, photographers and painters conveyed the resistance messages to vast audiences through their new journal, *Staffrider* (Holland, 1987; Pucherova, 2009). By 1985 disturbances were taking the form of school, bus and economic boycotts. This often led to a great deal of violence, especially in the black townships.

Gobodo-Madikizela (2004: 7), a black Cape Town University professor, described a scene of violence she had witnessed when she was 5 years old. It was an incident subsequent to the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 – the massacre in Langa where she was born and bred. This carnage, she said, was worse than in Sharpeville. Army trucks that looked like huge monsters roamed the streets menacingly, some charging furiously over walkways into large fields, firing indiscriminately into scattered groups of people. The image she recalled was that of ‘streets covered with blood and bodies lined up like cattle in a slaughter house’ (2004: 9).

Equally, a famous South African musician, Hugh Masekela, described incidents where the apartheid government demonstrated its brutal force, not only locally but outside the confines of SA in neighbouring countries. During the 1980s brutality from the state escalated, car bomb assassinations were targeted at exiled political activists in Europe, Windhoek, Dar es Salaam, Harare, Gaborone, Maseru, Mbabane and Luanda, Zambia. Families of those exiled were harassed and terrorised, some were arrested and interrogated, or detained indefinitely, whilst others were tortured. Those not imprisoned but still deemed dangerous to the state were placed under house arrest or banished. These included the former wife of Nelson Mandela, Winnie Madikizela Mandela. Hugh Masekela summed up the atmosphere as tense and utterly fearful (Masekela & Cheers, 2011).

By declaring a state of emergency in the 1980s, amidst increasing loss of control in major township areas, the NP thought it was re-establishing control. It resorted to banning, arrests, detentions without trial, and treason trials. Police interrogators tortured victims, and unidentified persons who were believed to be members of the security police assassinated anti-apartheid activists inside and outside South Africa.

Many gross violations of human rights occurred (Thompson, 2001: 235). Simultaneously, economic problems, especially high unemployment, helped to fuel political turmoil during this period, which in turn exacerbated economic difficulties (Beinart, 1994). Davenport & Saunders (2000: 415) reported that following the proclamation of the state of emergency, the government empowered authorities, especially in Cape Town, to prohibit gatherings, impose curfews, detain suspects, impound publications, search premises and do whatever was necessary to maintain public order.

The history of South Africa between February 1990 and April 1994 was 'chaotic and bloody, though not as bloody as it had been predicted' (Ross, 1999: 185). Popular struggles that had reached a nation-wide crescendo achieved their aim of making SA ungovernable. For instance, militant youths seemed always on the move, dancing the 'toyitoyi' (jog-trotting in large crowds) through the streets, lending agency to the political movement (Beinart, 1994).

The conflicts in the townships and the ungovernability of the state propelled the negotiations between the ANC and the NP. The newly elected leader of the NP, former conservative member, following its failure to win sufficient votes, Frederik Willem de Klerk, was determined to seize the initiative from the opposition forces and keep his party and constituency in the political vanguard. De Klerk sought to develop a power base and constitutional system which, while perhaps ending the overall political dominance of whites, would protect their position in the country. Prior to de Klerk, P. W. Botha had already recognised that the key might lie with Nelson Mandela, and Congress itself had projected Mandela as a symbol of unity and hope – he was the most easily recognisable icon of a new SA, both at home and abroad (Beinart, 1994).

The result of the negotiations was an interim constitution agreed upon in November 1993 and adopted by the tricameral Parliament in the following month. Importantly, this meant that the transition from apartheid to democracy was achieved with constitutional continuity, something on which both de Klerk and Mandela, two lawyers of conservative temperament, had always insisted. In other words, the country's laws might be changed but the supremacy of the law was maintained (Beinart, 1994). A date was therefore set for the first universal elections in SA's history. From 26 to 29 April 1994, SA would go to the polls to elect a new constituent and legislative assembly, and thereby a new president. On 10 May 1994, de Klerk and Thabo Mbeki were sworn in as

vice-presidents and Mandela took an oath as the president of a country in which the scars of the past were temporarily hidden, before a vast and jubilant multitude.

Since then, SA has managed to transform itself through taking many radical steps. In order to effect this change in a meaningful way and following in the footsteps of its predecessors, the Latin American and Eastern European commissions, the government established the TRC to ensure that the handover from an oppressive to a democratic government was done in a manner that promoted peaceful co-existence and prevented the bloodshed that so many had predicted.

## **1.3 Background to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

### **1.3.1 The reason for the creation of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions**

Hayner (2000) reports that the interest in truth commissions has grown considerably, and close to a dozen new truth commissions have been created, including those in Panama, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Peru and East Timor (see also Humphrey, 2003; Kalayjian & Paloutzian, 2009).

Several countries have moved rapidly toward establishing a truth commission, such as Ghana, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Burundi (Hayner, 2000) and it is evident that the 'commission' has become an important transition tool (Campbell, 2000). From the overthrow of communism in Eastern Europe to the varied political transitions and upheavals in Asia, new governments have swept out the old and have celebrated the chance to start afresh. Many of these changes have taken place since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the rapid end of the Cold War, which has removed the incentive for countries to give international support to corrupt and abusive regimes. Wilson (2003: 368) reports that the idea of 'national reconciliation' emerged from a particular set of historical and political experiences: namely, the transitions to liberal democracy that occurred at the end of the Cold War, around 1991.

'When a period of authoritarian rule or civil war ends, a state and its people stand at a crossroads' (Hayner, 2002: 4). When such a change occurs, questions are

asked about what is to be done with a recent history full of victims and perpetrators of crimes against humanity; about secretly buried bodies, pervasive fear and official denial; about whether this past should be exhumed, preserved, acknowledged or apologised for; about how a nation of enemies can be reunited, former opponents reconciled, in the context of such violent history and often bitter, festering wounds; about what should be done with hundreds and thousands of perpetrators still walking free; and about how a new government can prevent such atrocities from being repeated in the future. Whilst individual survivors struggle to rebuild shattered lives, and to ease the burning memory of torture suffered or massacres witnessed, society as a whole must find a way to move on, to recreate a liveable space of national peace, build some form of reconciliation between former enemies and secure these events in the past (Hayner, 2002; Wilson, 2003). These were the questions I asked myself when I considered the traumatic past of SA.

There are many types of commission, just as there are many types of transition, and each commission has its own limitations. The South African TRC is but one recent variation, albeit one that many viewed with high expectations, and as such it has been subject to assessment and scrutiny by other countries willing to try and follow in its footsteps.

Once the ANC had taken political power, the new government was faced with the problem of how to fashion justice in a time of transition. Various points of view were put forward with regard to how best to handle abuses of the past, and broadly speaking they could be divided into three camps: the minimalists, the pragmatists and the maximalists. Campbell (2000) and Braithwaite (2003) suggested a minimalist approach, arguing that respectful listening was more likely to promote reconciliation than a concerted effort to expose horrific details or exert retribution as these would only bring more pain and further divide the country. On the other end there is the maximalist who think that anything less than full prosecution of all involved is unacceptable, arguing that the authoritarian regimes are at their weakest during the transition, hence the transition (Campbell (2000). However the SA TRC chose the middle of the road i.e. pragmatism. The pragmatists argue that the pursuit of truth and justice must be tempered with recognition with the political reality of a given society (Campbell 2000). Therefore for the SA TRC which was created as a result of a negotiated settlement, being pragmatic suited

the political reality of SA. Yet, for minimalists can a society build a democratic future on a foundation of blind, denied or forgotten history? In recent years, virtually every country emerging from a dark history has confronted this question directly. In some countries it has been debated during peace negotiations, where the past is often the first item on the agenda (Hayner, 2002). Elsewhere, new governments have confronted the issue of accountability for past crimes, often one of the most pressing issues facing a new administration, especially where there are thousands of victims demanding action. It is argued that change may come at the end of a civil war through the downfall of a military regime or through popular revolt against a repressive regime, combined with shifting winds of international support. But in each of these very different types of political transition, very similar questions and difficulties arise (Hayner, 2000a; De Vos, 2002; Mamdani, 2005; Gready, 2008; Moon, 2009; Gready, 2008).

### **1.3.2 Comparison between the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and others**

This section deals with how the South African TRC compared with other truth commissions in Africa. This is important in order to assess how much influence it had on other commissions in the continent.

Hugo van der Merwe (2009) argues that international comparative research is key in assessing the universality of the justice 'instinct' and in unpacking the various cultural and local meanings and orientations that develop in the face of quite different forms and contents of abuse. Some commissions in southern Africa (Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Malawi) focused on reparations only. He argues that there is a need for SA to be aware of how and what attempts are being or have been made by other African countries in dealing with human rights violations. Alden and Le Pere (2004) argue that SA's post-apartheid foreign policy will continue to play a determining role in security and development on the African continent and in the broader relations between the North and South.

For the purpose of clarification, I have chosen briefly to compare five commissions, which Hayner (2002) refers to as the 'less-prominent important truth commissions' within Africa, with the South African TRC: namely, those in Rwanda,



Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Most share characteristics but I have also highlighted some differences. I shall discuss these features according to the following aspects: mandate, process and outcome. The size, nature and breath of the mandate of investigation has been a deciding factor.

An important assertion made by Droždek (2010) is that, although the TRCs in Africa, including SA, are nowadays some of the most exposed and discussed models of making peace with the past, there are those who favour them and those who have criticised them. He contends that these TRCs are rooted in both African 'witch-believing' culture and Christianity. However, this view will not be elaborated here as it is not directly relevant to this chapter.

### **1.3.3 Mandate, process and outcome**

While these TRCs were all commissioned to inquire into human rights abuses, those in SA, Ghana and Sierra Leone were created under an Act of Parliament, whilst the other three were created as a decree by the president in office at the time.

In Uganda the inquiry was established in 1971 by President Idi Amin and the mandate was to investigate the accusation of disappearances especially from the international community. The commission was composed of an expatriate Pakistani judge as the chair, two Ugandan police superintendents and a Ugandan army officer. Later it expanded the Commission to compel witnesses to testify and had the power to call for evidence from official sources, although access to information was blocked by many sectors of the government, including the military police and military intelligence (Hayner, 2002).

In terms of process, whilst the first inquiry was less positive due to a lack of political will, the second under President Museveni Obote encountered its own problems, mainly regarding the funds needed to take it to its conclusion. In terms of outcome, the commission yielded very few benefits for the victims and its subsequent report had little impact on the Amin government. The report was not published and, as is well known, abuses increased markedly under his regime, earning him the nickname 'the butcher of Uganda' (Hayner, 2002:52).

Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission Act 611 (2002) set up a commission to establish an accurate, complete and historical record of violations and abuses of human rights inflicted on persons by public institutions and holders of public office during periods of unconstitutional government. In terms of outcome, its report was submitted to the president in October 2004 and released to the public in April 2005. Despite this, Ame and Alidu (2010) argue that there remain serious challenges to the general stability and development of the country, such as endemic ethnic conflicts, some of which have assumed national significance, real and perceived nepotism and tribalism, persistent political violence and the perception of selective justice. However, Ame et al. contend that the adoption of pragmatic policies and practices such as Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission should be seen as a move in the right direction.

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was mandated to investigate atrocities after the end of a nine-year civil war that had been marked by acts of severe brutality. The war was notorious internationally for the atrocious practice (especially of the rebel forces) of cutting limbs off civilians, apparently for the sole purpose of discouraging support for the government. The Sierra Leone peace agreement included an unconditional general amnesty, but when this was criticised, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established, although very few details were specified about its operations. The peace agreement called for the commission to: 'address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both victims and perpetrators to tell their stories and get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation' (Hayner, 2002: 70).

Kelsall (2005) and Shaw (2007) examined the models of justice in Sierra Leone after the war. They found that, according to local custom, a process of 'directed forgetting' (Cole, 2001) started spontaneously on cessation of mass violence. However, when the TRC was set up, this became the only forum for recounting trauma stories. As the TRC aimed at achieving collective healing through truth, this resonated with vocal constituencies of the local populations and had a cathartic impact on the community, but it was at odds with the traditional concept of reintegration through social forgetting. Droždek (2010) contends that this cathartic impact was achieved not because of truth but because of the ritualisation of closure. Research by Shaw (2007) showed that

survivors were motivated to participate in the TRC mainly in the hope of exchanging their stories for material benefits or because of promises made.

The work of the Zimbabwe commission of inquiry is not very well known. The commission was established in 1985 to investigate government repression of 'dissidents' in the Matebeleland of the country. The commission worked under the authority of the president and was chaired by a Zimbabwean lawyer. Nobody was made accountable for the atrocities, however, for fear of a backlash. Whilst human rights organisations stressed the need for accountability and wrote a report to that effect, victims' families were more interested in formal recognition of the killings, partly so they could receive compensation. The final report was never made available.

In Nigeria, after 15 years of military rule, in early 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo created a commission of inquiry to investigate human rights violations with special reference to all known or suspected cases of mysterious death and assassination or attempted assassination committed in Nigeria between 1 January 1984 and 28 May 1999. With a broad mandate and very little time to complete its duties, it reevaluated its plan, after hosting a retreat with former members of commissions in Guatemala, Chile and SA. Similar to the South African TRC, the focus on abuses was narrowed to only 'gross human rights violations', whilst the period under investigation was extended back to 1966, to include the first military coup in Nigeria. The chair of the commission was a highly respected retired judge (Hayner, 2002). The vast majority of the abuses reported, about 90 per cent, pertained to labour disputes. Similar to Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe, the final report presented to the president in 2002 was never officially released to the public.

In Rwanda, following the genocide of hundreds of Tutsis by Hutus, Gacacas, the equivalent of truth and reconciliation commissions, were established to deal with conflict management of such atrocities. The Gacaca courts were led by locally selected judges and participation was mandatory, involving the accused and witnesses. The purpose of the Gacaca was to promote truth, unity and reconciliation, although Brouneus (2008) disputes the assumption in much of the peace-building literature as well as the political rhetoric that truth-telling is cathartic or healing and will thereby advance reconciliation. Droždek (2010) argues that unfortunately in Rwanda no reparations took place for victims; however, monuments displaying bones of the

genocide victims have been created by Rwandans themselves. He contends that a 'physical form of memory was for the society more valuable than a narrative form' (Droždek, 2010: 11).

The South African TRC, though similar in many respects to those described above, demonstrated differences that have led to its portrayal as an example for others to emulate. It entered into a brokered power-sharing settlement, as neither the NP of the apartheid regime nor the armed wing of the ANC had won the battle outright. Unlike some of the Latin American truth commissions, it did not advocate a blanket amnesty for generals, but instead agreed on an amnesty/disclosure deal that awarded amnesty to any perpetrator who confessed their acts, omissions and offences committed with political objectives in the course of past conflicts. This proved to be the most controversial and contentious issue during the negotiations on an interim constitution in late 1993. Hayner (2002: 41) reports that only later was the amnesty linked to a truth-seeking process.

Unlike most truth commissions, the South African TRC was not only conducted under a religious banner by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Alex Boraine, but had forgiveness as its focus: victims were expected to award forgiveness to all those perpetrators who confessed to the TRC. Comparatively speaking, the South African TRC appears to have received more support than others in Africa, financially and in many other ways, and although there were delays, the final five volumes of its report were submitted to President Mandela and circulated accordingly. Whilst not everybody is satisfied with the work of the TRC, it is claimed that it achieved most of what it was set up for – that is, victims/survivors were given the opportunity to tell their story, perpetrators confessed their deeds in public and the controversial amnesty was provided as promised – but although efforts were made to offer symbolic and other reparations, monetary compensation remains unsatisfactory for most survivors.

Hayner (2002) argues that the South African amnesty-for-truth model is unusual, and indeed is inappropriate and unworkable in most contexts. It is therefore important to mention that other aspects of testimony, and the Commission's role with which victims experienced difficulties, such as forgiveness, truth and reconciliation, will be discussed further in Chapter 2, and empirical evidence explored.

Whilst it can be difficult and challenging for any one commission to unearth the truth about atrocities, the South African TRC is said to have succeeded in bringing this subject to the centre of international attention, especially through its public hearings of both victims and perpetrators, outlining horrific details of past crimes (Campbell, 2000: 49).

As described earlier, the various points of view regarding how to handle abuses of the past can be divided into three camps (Campbell, 2000): that is, maximalists, pragmatists and minimalists. The maximalists, who comprise mainly human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, retain the view that anything other than full-scale prosecutions is unacceptable. They believe that granting amnesty may prove, in the long run, more dangerous than dealing with the past. Minimalists, on the hand, put forward arguments delineating the need for a society to move forward and not dwell on the past. Typically belonging to this group are supporters of the former authoritarian regime, such as de Klerk and the NP in SA, and the military in both Argentina and Chile, usually for fear of what they call 'a witch-hunt' (Campbell, 2000). SA chose the middle-of-the-road framework: pragmatism. This was due to the settlement negotiated by the ANC and the NP, which guaranteed immunity. Proponents of this school of thought argue that the most one can hope for is truth, and even then, sometimes only a limited version of it. Thus the argument goes: 'the overall stability of society prevails over the needs of the victims' (Campbell, 2000: 45).

However, the South African TRC's handling of human rights has been critiqued on different levels. Mamdani (2005), for instance, contends that although the TRC acknowledged apartheid as a 'crime against humanity' which targeted entire communities for ethnic and racial policing cleansing, the Commission reduced apartheid from a relationship between the state and entire communities to one between the state and individuals. In a sense by individualising the victim, this obliterated a particular – many would argue, central – characteristic of apartheid. Limiting the definitions of harm and remedy to individuals created a stage for political activists to appear as victims of apartheid, the consequence of which was to narrow the TRC perspective to a political reconciliation between the state agents and political activists – between members of a fractured political elite – rather than achieving 'national unity and reconciliation' (Mamdani, 2005: 34).

Scholars argue that the process of establishing justice in a wounded society must be a 'balancing act' (Bala, 2004; Droždek, 2010), combining individual and collective 'healing' and shifting between damage and sources of resilience. 'The challenge is ... to find a route between too much memory and too much forgetting' (Droždek, 2010: 14).

This section has shown that SA has attempted to create a culture of human rights as well as being a major contributor to dealing with Africa's economic and security issues. As we have seen, its TRC shared some features with previous commissions, but in other ways was quite distinctive.

## **1.4 The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

The South African TRC created an opportunity for victims of human rights violations to share their stories and was also instituted to offer amnesty to perpetrators. According to Mamdani (2005: 33):

First, there would be no blanket amnesty. Amnesty would be conditional. It would not be a group amnesty. Every perpetrator would have to be identified individually, and would have to own up to his or her guilt – the truth – before receiving amnesty from legal prosecution. Second, any victim who is so acknowledged would give up the right to prosecute perpetrators in courts of law. Justice for the victim would thus not be criminal but restorative: acknowledgment would be followed by reparations. In sum, individual amnesty for the perpetrator, truth for the society, and acknowledgement and reparations for the victim – this was the pact built into the legislation that set up the TRC.

Thus the TRC sought to compel perpetrators, especially the ones who were applying for amnesty, to come forward, confess and tell the truth regarding their part in committing human rights atrocities. Despite criticisms and doubts regarding its overall effectiveness, it has been hailed as 'one of the most remarkable efforts of peacemaking in recent human history' (Vora & Vora, 2004: 302).

In deciding to use a transitional system to facilitate a smooth handover of political power, there had been an expectation:

‘that the commission would investigate many of the human rights violations which were caused, for example, by the denial of freedom of movement through the pass laws, by forced removals of peoples for their land, by the denial of franchise to citizenship, by the treatment of farm workers and other labour disputes and by discrimination in such areas as education and work opportunities’. (Mamdani, 2005: 36)

Many organisations lobbied the Commission to insist that these issues fundamentally shaped by apartheid policies be part of its investigations. Commission members too felt that these were important areas that could not be ignored. Nevertheless they could not be interpreted as falling directly within the commissioners’ mandate. Instead, when the South African TRC was set up, its principal mandate was to investigate the extent and nature of past violent and political crimes and have them documented so that they would never be repeated. In addition, the Commission was required to restore the human and civil dignity of victims and recommend reparation measures; and to compile a report of its findings and activities and recommend measures to prevent future violations of human rights (Krog, 1999). The whole process took place over 6 years, from 1994 when Nelson Mandela was released from prison to 2000 when the final report of the TRC was completed.

As we saw in section 1.3, the South African TRC was different from its predecessors in Latin America in some respects (Hayner, 2002; Hayner, 2006). Forgiveness and amnesty were at the core of its functioning and this is reflected, according to Krog (1999), in the following clause:

The adoption of this constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of SA to transcend the division and strife of the past, which generated gross human rights violations, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge – these can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for

vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for Ubuntu [ the African philosophy of humanism] but not for victimisation. In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences associated with political objectives and committed in the course of conflicts of the past. (Krog, 1999: vii)

Krog (1999) describes the composition of the TRC and its method of working. It was duly established by an Act of Parliament and the Commission was made up of 16 members consisting of three committees. The Human Rights Committee was to examine the accounts of victims through public hearings and investigations. The Amnesty Committee was to evaluate amnesty applications. This committee consisted of five members (two commissioners and three independent judges); it was totally independent and could not be ruled by the Commission itself. The third committee was the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, whose function was to formulate a reparations policy to restore and rehabilitate the lives of victims and survivors of human rights violations (Krog, 1999: viii).

The TRC had an investigative and a research unit and was given powers to subpoena individuals. It was provided with a large budget, much of it from foreign donors. It set up an elaborate organisation with four regional offices and a large number of employees, who took more than 20,000 statements from victims of political violence (Thompson, 2001: 275). The Commission started in December 1995 by hearing victims of human rights abuses tell their stories, which, according to Thompson (2001), were more horrific than anyone had imagined. Many of the stories highlighted the callous brutality of the police and military forces, including the murders of political activists and/or exceptionally cruel methods used in interrogation and intimidation.

During the TRC proceedings, some victims were prepared mentally to testify before hundreds of people and in the presence of the media, but others were not. They had been promised that they would face their perpetrators and listen to their confessions of how loved ones had been tortured and/or murdered, or where they had been buried in the case of the disappeared. The survivors were either implicitly or explicitly told that perpetrators were not expected to ask for forgiveness; nor were they expected to show remorse. However, the victims were expected to offer forgiveness, if



not for themselves, then for society as a whole. The victims were therefore encouraged to reconcile themselves to this process whilst instances of victims' explicit forgiveness of perpetrators were especially affirmed. The injunction to forgive was implicit in the functioning of the TRC, as its major concern was to facilitate peaceful co-existence between perpetrators of extreme and traumatic human rights violations and the victims on whom these had been inflicted.

Krog (1999) reports that for over two years South Africans were exposed to daily revelations about their traumatic past. In the cities and in many smaller towns, in improvised courtrooms fashioned out of town halls, community centres and churches, the drama of apartheid and the struggle against it was played out. The Commission received 20,000 statements from victims, 2,000 of these in public hearings; and it received nearly 8,000 applications for amnesty from perpetrators (Krog, 1999; Thompson, 2001; Hamber, 2009).

Recipient of the 1994 Nobel Peace prize, Emeritus Archbishop Tutu, was persuaded by President Mandela to accept the chairmanship of the TRC. This appointment and that of three other clergy, including the vice chairperson, may have given the TRC an overriding religious tone rather than a legal one, even though six of the commissioners were lawyers (Thompson, 2001: 275).

The final report, which was submitted to Nelson Mandela in 2000, cited P. W. Botha, de Klerk's predecessor, and Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), as responsible for gross violations of human rights and stated that de Klerk was an accessory to such violations. Though most violations were linked to the apartheid system, it also revealed that the liberation movements, especially the ANC, had committed a substantial number of grave abuses. Although ANC president Thabo Mbeki admitted to the commission of some of these acts, he insisted that all actions by the ANC had been perpetrated in a 'just war' of liberation, to be distinguished from atrocities committed by the apartheid state.

The TRC endorsed the United Nations' resolution that apartheid was a 'crime against humanity' and it drew a distinction between a 'just war' and 'just means', finding the ANC guilty of gross human rights violations. To support this assertion, Tutu explained that 'a gross violation is a gross violation. Whoever commits it and for whatever reason.

There is a legal equivalence between all perpetrators. Their personal affiliation is irrelevant' (Thompson, 2001: 277; Tutu, 1999: 80).

Since its inception there have been numerous criticisms of the TRC. In part these concerns will be covered in Chapter 2, through the literature review.

## **1.5 Summary**

In this chapter I have sought to explain and highlight the historical, social and political nature of South Africa during apartheid and at the end of apartheid when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed to facilitate a peaceful handover from the National Party to the majority black government of the African National Congress. In addition, I have tried to elucidate how and why apartheid government became untenable amidst massive protests against its abusive policies of racial domination, national and international condemnation as well as the collapse of its economic system. Comparisons have been made between the South African TRC and five other commissions in Africa with the view to assessing how and why the South African TRC differs from others in the continent and whether it could be replicated elsewhere. The chapter highlights my presuppositions and assumptions as an insider/outsider researcher, exploring perceptions of the effectiveness of the TRC in providing healing in the long term for the victims/survivors who presented their stories to it.

In undertaking this project, I hope to uncover how my assumptions about this era in the history of South Africa have been shaped and altered through this process. The next chapter addresses research into the experiences of people giving testimony to the South African TRC, and the meanings, challenges and benefits they describe.

## Chapter 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will set out a review of key literature relevant to this study by considering studies of the effectiveness of the South African TRC in helping victims of human rights violations to realise wellbeing and closure following their one-off presentation to it, as claimed in the TRC final reports. The literature will hopefully assist in looking at different aspects of the TRC's role in assisting victims to manage their feelings around forgiveness, testimony and amnesty, amongst others, which were central to the functioning of the TRC but also very controversial in terms of fulfilling promises.

Levy and Ellis (2006) have suggested that the literature review is most helpfully regarded as an organic system that is constantly growing and changing as a study develops. This is true of this study, which has spanned eight years, during which time both the area of inquiry and the use of the method selected continued to develop simultaneously within psycho-social science.

### 2.2 Searching the literature

Several methods were employed to search for literature relevant to this study. As this study employed grounded theory method (GMT) principles for analysing data, the literature research was conducted *after* data were collected and the chapter presenting findings (Chapters 4 and 5) were written. However, this is not to say that the researcher started the research as a *tabula rasa*; I had some familiarity with previous research and an idea about where the gaps were. A very limited initial literature review was done so that I would not be influenced by extant literature, as argued by Glaser (1992) and Pidgeon and Henwood (1997).

Firstly a broad sweep of the literature was conducted and gradually the search was narrowed down. Electronic searches of databases SCOPUS, Web of Science and Web of Knowledge were carried out. In addition, CINAHL Plus and PsycINFO via EBSCO were

searched. The basic search was via 'keywords', after which articles were scanned through their titles or their abstracts and summaries. Although numerous articles on the South African TRC were located, only one was found using grounded theory methods/principles: Kaminer's study conducted three years after victims/survivors gave testimony – that is, in 1999. This study will be discussed in detail in section 2.5.

To search for papers and publications, key words used were 'Truth Reconciliation Commission in South Africa' plus 'forgiveness', 'reconciliation', 'amnesty' and 'testimony', for advanced searches. When the search provided too many irrelevant\* references and it was recognised that the search was too general, it was focused using further 'search terms' together, such as: 'Truth & Reconciliation + South Africa + forgiveness', as follows:

Truth & Reconciliation
South Africa
Forgiveness

'Forgiveness' in the third box could be replaced by 'amnesty', 'truth', 'reconciliation' or 'healing'.

Research articles found, including 'the effects of testifying to truth commissions', were numerous at around 24,000, many of which were opinion-based or anecdotal articles alongside some thoroughly researched studies. Due to this huge amount of literature I had to confine my review to 15 relevant researched studies, about 50 articles, and 4 well-written books on the subject of the South African TRC. Papers were excluded for the following reasons:

- Participants were not victims (direct and indirect) as defined by the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995), which is the focus of this research project.
- Participants did not testify to the TRC.
- Victims were not black. 'Black South Africans', including coloureds and/or Indians, composed the largest number of direct victims.
- Victims were not from the Western Cape or Gauteng provinces.
- Victims were under the age of 16.

For books relating to the study, the library catalogue was used. The ‘Summon’ facility as well as Google Scholar were utilised for most journals and articles. To locate relevant qualitative research, terms included ‘grounded theory’ in one search box - and/or ‘qualitative’. Materials were also searched via specific journal sites, such as those for *Qualitative Health Research* and *Counselling and Psychology*.

Later on, the materials were selected using thematic criteria, such as forgiveness, amnesty, truth/reconciliation and healing, and also included details about methods and findings. Table 2.1 shows all the studies consulted, some with their methodology, design, sample size and results/findings. The table has been divided up according to the main focuses of the study: i.e. forgiveness, truth/reconciliation, amnesty and healing. Most of the studies were undertaken immediately after the TRC finished its work and others just a few years before this study, except for one conducted by Clark (2012), two months after this study.

**Table 2.1 Summary of studies**

Title of study	Author, date	Participants	Methodology/ method/ analysis	Results
<b>1. Forgiveness</b>				
a) What price forgiveness?	Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004	Political activists	Clinical work	Refusal to forgive is a form of bondage whilst ability to forgive is a road to recovery
b) SA TRC: Relation to psychiatric status and forgiveness amongst survivors of human rights violations	Kaminer et al., 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 134 participants, comprising three groups, reporting depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative and quantitative</li> <li>• Snowballing process</li> <li>• Structured interviews</li> <li>• Mini-International neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI)</li> <li>• Diagnostic interviews</li> <li>• Enright Forgiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No association between TRC and depression</li> <li>• Incidents of anxiety, depression and PTSD significantly lower in people offering forgiveness</li> <li>• No significant differences amongst</li> </ul>

		<p>disorder (PTSD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct and indirect victims with psychiatric disorders</li> <li>• All submitted to TRC</li> </ul>	<p>Inventory (EFI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI): Post-traumatic Stress Disorder module</li> </ul>	<p>the three groups</p>
<p>c) Impact of TRC on psychological distress and forgiveness</p>	<p>Stein et al., 2008</p>	<p>SASH -South Africa Stress and Health Study: based on a national probability sample of 4, 351 adults</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-stage probability sample design</li> <li>• First stage: selection of stratified sample based on SA Census Enumeration</li> <li>• Second stage: sampling of houses and units</li> <li>• Third stage: random selection of one adult respondent from each housing unit</li> <li>• Two scales used to measure psychological and anger/hostility</li> <li>• Two-item scale used to measure forgiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant association between attendance at TRC, increased levels of distress/anger and decreased forgiveness</li> <li>• In absence of other measures, testifiers found TRC a painful and disempowering experience</li> <li>• Anger was associated with negative perceptions of TRC</li> <li>• Sample as a whole was moderately positive about TRC experience</li> </ul>
<p>d) Forgiveness among victims of political violence:</p>	<p>Sonis et al., 2002</p>	<p>70 participants from Katorus branch of Khulumani (East</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Focus groups between August and September 2000</li> </ul>	<p>Participants cited various models, conditions and reasons for forgiveness:</p>

Evidence from SA TRC		Rand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employed three-part sampling survey</li> <li>• Convenience sample</li> <li>• Interviews were audio-taped</li> <li>• Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires</li> <li>• Content analysis was used for focus groups</li> <li>• For surveys EFI was used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health, moral, religious and pro-social</li> <li>• vocal in enumerating factors impeding forgiveness, e.g. social pressure</li> <li>• described multi-faceted role TRC played in victim's decision to forgive or not</li> </ul>
e) Unknown title, work cited by Chapman & van der Merwe (2008)	Backer, 2002–3	228 victims of human rights violations and members of Khulumani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative research using a survey sample included questions on forgiveness in an instrument that dealt with a wide range of political attitudes of survivors of human rights violations</li> <li>• No design mentioned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% denied forgiving, 12% forgave partially and 9% not at all.</li> <li>• Large number who forgave did so on basis of religious and political beliefs</li> </ul>
f) Truth commissions and intergroup forgiveness: The case of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.	Chapman 2007	429 deponents who testified at the TRC	Analysis of testimony transcripts and further focus group enquiry; limited information about data analysis	Only 14% sample discussed forgiveness; <2% said they were ready to offer unconditional forgiveness
g) Forgiveness attitudes of	Kaminer, 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative and quantitative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forgiveness attitudes were</li> </ul>

TRC: Relation to commission response during testimony		<p>from the Western Cape who testified in 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim: examine whether deponents were coerced by the TRC into forgiving</li> </ul>	<p>frameworks were used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For data analysis, comparative analysis utilising mixed methods and integrating inductive analytic methods from grounded theory with statistical methods more typical of classical content analysis</li> <li>• EFI was used to measure attitudes toward violations perpetrated</li> </ul>	<p>highly polarised: participants were either highly forgiving or highly unforgiving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings do not support the claims that the TRC coerced deponents to forgive</li> <li>• However, findings raise the possibility that for forgiveness to be facilitated by TRC testimony deponents may need to receive individualising acknowledgement from TRC panel</li> </ul>
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## 2 Truth/reconciliation

a) Does truth lead to reconciliation? Testing the causal assumptions of the South African truth and reconciliation process.	Gibson, 2004	Survey of 3,700 South Africans of all races between 2000 and 2001	To measure whether truth contributed to reconciliation, Gibson developed a Reconciliation Index and a Truth Acceptance Index, consisting of 9 statements relating to people's feelings about the opposite racial group and 5 statements relating to apartheid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings are inconclusive, but truth did not undermine reconciliation</li> <li>• Less certain is the causal claim that truth did indeed create reconciliation</li> </ul>
b) Reconciliation	Clark, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two types of interviewee:</li> </ul>	Purposive sampling strategy used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passage of time has given the elite</li> </ul>



via truth? A study of SA TRC		<p>8 victims who testified and 7 individuals who served as commissioners in TRC process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research done between July and August 2010</li> </ul>		<p>interviewees (commissioners) a greater appreciation of the TRC's strengths and shortcomings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For victims the disappointment with the TRC had increased over the years due to the failure of reparations and lack of socio-economic improvements</li> </ul>
<b>3 Amnesty</b>				
a) Reconciliation via amnesty? Amnesty applicants' view of SA TRC	Abrahamsen & Van der Merwe, 2005	<p>Amnesty applicants: (11 in Western Cape, 8 in Eastern Cape, 9 in Gauteng), plus TRC staff and lawyers.</p> <p>Interviews between January and June 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowballing sampling process</li> <li>• Public transcripts</li> <li>• Key individuals and organisations</li> <li>• Open-ended questionnaires for data collection</li> <li>• Interviews tape recorded</li> <li>• Does not explain analysis tool</li> </ul>	<p>Complex discussion but themes arising from interviews not clearly delineated. Mixed attitudes towards TRC."Inter-linked connection between economic, social and personal despair" (p7).</p>
b) Impact of the TRC's amnesty process on survivors of human rights violations	Phakathi & van der Merwe, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45 participants comprising: 27 survivors (both victims and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Snowballing process</li> <li>• Structured, open-ended questionnaire</li> <li>• Triangulation</li> </ul>	<p>Due to lack of resources and time, and in relation to themes such as truth seeking, amnesty, fairness, healing, justice and</p>

		perpetrators) who testified; and 18 TRC staff		reconciliation, participants felt their needs were not adequately met by amnesty process
c) Watching a bargain unravel? A panel study of victims' attitudes about transitional justice in Cape Town, South Africa.	Backer, 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 153 apartheid victims</li> <li>• Study repeated in 2003, 2008</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative research</li> <li>• Design not explained</li> </ul>	Conclusion: marked decline in approval of amnesty, decreased acceptance of its necessity and increased desire for various forms of accountability, over a five-year period
<b>4 Healing</b>				
a) Perceptions of psychosocial healing and the SA TRC	De la Rey & Owens, 1998		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Social constructionism</li> <li>• Multi-dimensional approach comprising five testimony transcripts: interviews with two staff of the TRC human rights committees; and three individuals from NGOs</li> </ul>	Results and discussion are interwoven for continuity to allow for more integrated presentation of multiplicity of understandings and meanings of healing. Healing and suffering emerged as major themes. Narrative analysis illuminated the understanding of healing expressed by

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unstructured interviews used to collect data, which were audiotaped</li> <li>• Thematic analysis was used for analysis</li> </ul>	<p>participants</p> <p>Through these narratives the inextricable bondedness of the personal and social is elaborated. Implications: need to answer question of whether testimony structure of TRC affords enough space for effective expression.</p>
<p>b) 'Telling it like it is':</p> <p>Understanding the TRC from perspective of survivors</p>	<p>Hamber, Nageng &amp; O'Malley, 2000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 members of Khulumani group between January and May 1998</li> <li>• The areas covered were Soweto, Mamelodi, East Rand townships and the Vaal regions of Johannesburg</li> <li>• Only 8 testified to the TRC, 12 gave statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Method of collecting data not explained but interviews were conducted by interpreters and translated into English</li> <li>• Content analysis was used for analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many participants felt let down by the general TRC process despite its success at publicising atrocities of the past</li> <li>• Most expected at least to be told the truth</li> </ul>
<p>c) Victims' perspectives on</p>	<p>Picker, 2005</p>	<p>7 focus groups recruited via TRC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Grouped according</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, provision of space for</li> </ul>

human rights violations hearings		website and locally based organisations providing support to victims: 3 groups in Cape Town, 2 in Durban and 2 in Johannesburg	to race, gender and political affiliations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews conducted to collect data</li> <li>• Content analysis used to analyse</li> </ul>	storytelling and being recognised was achieved in this study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, uncertainty expressed about restoration of human and civil dignity and achievement of healing</li> </ul>
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## 2.3 Studies of complex issues regarding forgiveness, amnesty, truth, reconciliation and healing

### 2.3.1 Understanding the nature and experience of forgiveness

Forgiveness as a concept was not only at the centre of the functioning of the South African TRC, but became a subject of much debate afterwards. So it is proper for this study to look at how victims of human rights violations who testified to the TRC managed to grapple with this complex concept. ‘Forgive’ is simply defined in the *Oxford Dictionary* as ‘cease to resent, pardon or remit (in the case of debt)’. In this section I would like to highlight how several studies have demonstrated the different ways in which victims came to view and accept (or not) the notion of forgiveness in their testimonies to the TRC.

Utilising her understanding of Ubuntu as an ‘interconnectedness-towards-wholeness’, Krog argues that ‘forgiveness and reconciliation are not only closely linked but are mutually dependent’ (Krog, 2009: 355). The author critiques research on the conflict in Northern Island, which discusses the possibility of forgiveness without reconciliation and vice versa. However, Krog gives an example of how other scholars (such as Staub et al. 2005, in their studies of the Rwandan genocide) have viewed forgiveness: ‘Forgiveness involves letting go of anger and the desire for revenge. It can

help in diminishing the pain that results from victimisation and in moving away from an identity as a victim' (Staub et al., 2005; quoted in Krog, 2009: 355).

This view seems to accord with what Archbishop Tutu explained when asked in an interview by the editor of a Catholic magazine in 2000 about how possible it was to forgive such horrendous crimes. He said, emphasising the principles of Ubuntu, that 'in a way therefore, to forgive is the best form of self-interest' (Tutu cited by Scherer-Emunds, 2000: 27). Krog therefore argues that, as the TRC testimonies and texts have shown, within the worldview of interconnectedness-towards-wholeness (Ubuntu), 'in order to grow into one's fullest self, one's fullest potential personhood, the deed of asking for forgiveness and forgiveness itself, needs to lead to recovery, reconciliation and eventually to a fuller personhood' (Krog, 2009: 356).

However, this section concerns itself with studies that demonstrated how victims managed to grapple with the idea of forgiving (or not) the perpetrators of HRV. Saunders (2011), in her article on questionable associations between the role of forgiveness and transitional justice, argues that forgiveness has surprisingly gained prominence in transitional justice circles due, in part, to the impact of the South African TRC, the advocacy of forgiveness by educational and social psychologists and critiques of retributive justice in critical legal studies. Drawing on philosophy, psychology, literature, legal theory and records of transitional justice *in situ*, her article argues that while advocates claim significant personal and social benefits derive from forgiveness, transitional justice should not consider forgiveness as *a priori* good or as commensurate with either reconciliation or peace building (Saunders, 2011).

This line of argument is followed by Murphy (2003) where he defends his claim that forgiveness is not always completely good and vindictiveness is not always completely bad. These arguments will be discussed later in the chapter, but at this point it may be proper to look at the earlier origins of forgiveness. Andrews (2000) posits that, while forgiveness is a subject about which most people think they know something, or about which they at least have strong implicit views, its attraction as an academic subject is relatively limited. He argues that this subject normally interests scholars who are primarily from the disciplines of theology and philosophy. Though it has rarely been a subject of scrutiny for psychologists, one of the earliest exceptions to this was Jean Piaget, who in his famous study on the world of children's morality (Piaget, 1932) turned

his attention briefly to the question of forgiveness within a developmental context. He contemplated the relationship between justice and forgiveness, which he regarded as cognitive developmental equivalents (Enright et al., 1994: 67; Andrews, 2000) because for Piaget both constructs hinged on mutual respect, or reciprocity. Whilst he did not develop his ideas on this subject extensively, he did help to establish the basic groundwork for a debate which is still on-going (Andrews, 2000).

Based on work with victims of apartheid-induced trauma and its aftermath, Moosa and colleagues (2004) offer discussion of forgiveness in relation to political trauma. The authors' observations are informed by the therapeutic work they have engaged in with victims of political violence over approximately two decades (Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004). Moosa et al. (2004) posit that their belief is based on the premise that forgiveness is a desirable objective for individuals, as it acts as a catalyst for peace, both personal and interpersonal. However, they also claim that forgiveness is not an absolute and that when individuals or groups find, in good faith, that they are unable to forgive those who have wronged them, their choice not to forgive is no less worthy of respect (2004: 206).

This view is supported by Murphy (2003), who explores why forgiveness might not be seen as an unqualified good, why sincere repentance ought to be a precondition of forgiveness, and why it is sometimes all right to feel vindictive. Murphy & Hampton (1990) further argue that people with self-respect may not easily forgive moral injuries. This idea, however, does not run parallel with the ideas informing the South African TRC process when it entered into a brokered negotiated settlement. It was assumed that to forgive would be a precondition for peace in the country and even for reconciliation.

To understand this complex concept a little more, it is worthwhile returning to the exposition of the concept by Enright et al. (1998). His developmental model focuses on structures of reasoning, and the highest stages of development require the potential forgiver to 'focus on mercy or the forswearing of personal justice'. In one sense this might be true of the South African TRC, as even if victims did not forgive, the state was going to forgive on their behalf.

Victims often expressed the desire for perpetrators not only to come forward and confess but to ask for forgiveness and show remorse for the most hideous of crimes. But this was not required, which shows how little victims' expectations of the process were

taken into account. As some authors have contended, this was not about the individual but about the society. The South African TRC was more concerned with ensuring a peaceful and smooth transfer of political power. A leading Chilean advocate, Zalaquett, argues that 'according to the rule of law the victims cannot hold a veto power or decide on the general rules of society' (Campbell, 2000: 45). What this means then is that the overall stability of society prevails over the needs of the victims.

On the other hand, as the TRC brokered into a negotiated settlement, it made sense that even though perpetrators would not be expected to repent following their disclosure, there was recognition of real difference between real people by insisting on an actual meeting between opposing sides where the articulation of those differences would be enhanced. Whilst this model supports the face-to-face contact which happened when victims told their story and perpetrators confessed to some of the horrendous crimes, the TRC appeared not to have envisaged the traumatic impact of such a meeting.

In contrast to what Enright asserts – that forgiveness is 'one person's response' (1992: 102; cited in Andrews, 2000: 77), being both unilateral and unconditional, Andrews further discussed whether forgiveness is based on the principle of ideal reciprocity, which 'puts the forgiven in a position that allows the two to interact as equals' (Power, 1994: 83). Here the dialogue itself is constructed as an opportunity for both offender and offended to experience themselves and the other as equals, thereby providing a forum for accountability, without which justice is at risk (Andrews, 2000).

If we believe that the act of forgiveness is to be a bridge between the hurt of the past and the hope of the future, then there must be some indication that the offending action will not occur again, as without this the future can hold little more promise than a perpetual re-enactment of former wounds. This certainly will continue to be an on-going debate now and in the future in SA, and an area that will need further exploration.

An early survey study touched upon attitudes towards forgiveness among 228 members of the Khulumani support group, the national victims' rights NGO (Backer, 2010; findings previously reported in Backer's unpublished PhD thesis in 2003). The data were collected between 2002 and 2003, in Cape Town, and included a few questions on forgiveness in an instrument that dealt with a wide range of political attitudes of survivors of human rights violations. Half of the respondents reported not forgiving

when asked, others did so partially and most of those who forgave claimed to have done so for religious reasons. Most reported that they did not understand why some families of the victims had forgiven. A key limitation is that this study is written as a commentary with limited exposition of the empirical tools used to obtain and analyse data. It also addressed issues fairly shortly after the TRC experience. This distinguishes the study from the research reported here, which addresses the long-term legacy of giving testimony.

Combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods have also been used to understand participants' experiences following testifying to the TRC. A study by Kaminer et al. (2001) was conducted in four areas in the Western Cape region of SA. This was a quantitative study involving 134 survivors, all suffering from some kind of psychiatric illnesses. Survivors were selected according to the TRC's definition of 'victim of gross human rights violation'. The study focused on African communities and was divided into those who submitted in person to the TRC, those who just provided statements, and those did not give a statement or policy testimony. To assess the level of forgiveness, instruments such as a structured interview schedule, a mini-international neuropsychiatric interview widely used in clinician-administered structured diagnostic interview for DSM-1V (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), the Enright Forgiveness Inventory, a self-rating scale of the affective, cognitive and behavioural components of forgiveness used in numerous empirical studies internationally, and the composite international diagnostic interview, and a PTSD event module, were used to measure trauma exposure in different cultural populations.

Generally, the results of this study indicated that there was no significant association between TRC participation and current psychiatric status or current forgiveness attitudes, and that a 'low forgiveness' score was associated with poorer psychiatric health. The apparent lack of any significant impact on symptoms suggests that the process of testifying may be qualitatively different from that of testimony therapy in clinical settings (which is considered helpful for addressing trauma and depression). Thus the study argues that it may be overly ambitious for truth commissions to have a 'therapeutic' goal, except at the national level. In addition, findings indicated that lack of forgiving was related to poor psychiatric adjustment, although the causal nature of this relationship could not be established. The authors also noted the tendency for survivors



to be either very forgiving or very unforgiving. This could have been the result of the selection process or the fact that the process of giving testimony facilitates a high level of forgiveness when it is effective. The study noted that men tended to express more forgiveness and women less so, thus the effectiveness of the public process may depend on the deponents' gender. This study also revealed that the healing capacity of a truth commission process in SA and elsewhere may be much enhanced by the provision of adequate and relevant mental health services (Kaminer et al., 2001).

What we have learned from Kaminer's study is that truth commissions may not be sufficient to reduce psychiatric symptoms and promote forgiveness, and that lack of forgiveness may be an important predictor of psychiatric risk among survivors of human rights abuses. Though the study was well researched with a clear methodology and analytical tools clearly explained, the sample consisted mainly of psychiatric patients whose conditions could, at best, have had a tendency to fluctuate and, at worst, have been unpredictable. Basing findings on such a sample could be misleading as their attitudes towards forgiveness might not have been explained by the experience of participation in the TRC process alone. It could easily have relied on how the participant was feeling mentally at that point. In other words, the response to participating could have been influenced by the participant's psychiatric condition at that particular time. Moreover, not all the participants testified at the TRC, so the findings could not be generalised. A more qualitative study would probably have revealed deeper insights into victims' experiences of forgiveness.

Causal direction of influence was also uncertain. It is possible for example, that the more highly abused and traumatised individuals suffered more severe long-term psychological consequences *and* also could not find in themselves any reasons to forgive perpetrators of such atrocities. In addition, the risk of re-traumatisation was higher amongst such participants than amongst less vulnerable participants. Nevertheless, the study's conclusion is important: that more relevant mental health services are required when truth commissions engage such participants.

A later mixed-method study conducted in 2008 by the same author in collaboration with others, involved non-psychiatric survivors (Stein et al., 2008). This study came about as a result of claims that the TRC panel may have encouraged or even coerced deponents to forgive perpetrators of human rights abuses. An exploratory

study, it examined whether the current forgiveness attitudes of deponents were associated with the response that they received from the TRC panel at public hearings. The sample comprised 20 participants from the Western Cape who submitted testimonies to the TRC regarding human rights violations. Their first language was the local language (Xhosa) and the mean age was 57, with 57 per cent being women and 43 per cent men. The Enright Forgiveness Inventory was used to assess participants' attitudes towards the perpetrator of the violation about which they testified. The comparative analysis utilised a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods, integrating inductive analysis methods from grounded theory with a statistical approach, more typical of classical content analysis. According to its authors, the results of this study, which were very similar to those of Kaminer et al. (2001), indicated that forgiveness attitudes were highly polarised; participants were either very forgiving or very unforgiving. What the authors also read from these results was that the sample did not support observers' claims that the TRC panel at public hearings coerced deponents to be forgiving.

In both studies, authors argued that this polarisation in forgiveness attitudes is associated with certain responses from the TRC panel at public hearings: that is, forgiving participants reported that they had been given more attention than unforgiving participants. In other words, the forgiving group received acknowledgement and validation of their experiences whereas the other group did not. The authors argued that the results should be interpreted with caution, as although the study does not support anecdotal claims that the TRC coerced deponents, the findings do raise the possibility that for forgiveness to be facilitated by the TRC, testimony deponents may need to receive individualised acknowledgement from the TRC panel. The authors agree that the findings of this small exploratory study remain tentative and are subject to further research on the role that truth commission panels may play in the development of forgiveness amongst survivors of human rights violations.

Again, this study is well researched and has a clear methodology and analytic tools. The small sample, acknowledged as a limitation by the authors, is nonetheless adequate in terms of grounded theory methodology. As in the previous study (Kaminer et al., 2001), the use of interpreters for the collection of data and the authors getting involved only at the analysis stage may have reduced the researchers' opportunity of

interacting intimately with data, as is often advocated by grounded theorists (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Charmaz, 2006). In addition, the use of 'reflexivity' is not mentioned in this study, so it is not clear what the challenges were within the research process and how they were dealt with.

A study by Moosa, Straker and Eagle (2004) of clinical work with political activists highlighted the paradoxical nature of forgiveness. They argue that the inherently complicated nature of forgiveness is emphasised by writers who describe it as 'paradoxical'. For instance, Freedman and Enright (1996: 983) observe that 'there is a decided paradoxical quality to forgiveness as the forgiver gives up the resentment to which he or she has a right, and gives the gift of compassion to which the offender has no right'. Moosa et al (2004) argue that while forgiveness in interpersonal situations (e.g. instances where individuals have been abused) does not have a political dimension, the choice to forgive has an extra dimension in contexts of political trauma, as it is often experienced not as a personal choice only, but as one that has implications for other people. Thus for political activists, the choice of either to forgive or not represents a political position. For instance, since allegiance to one's comrades is a central guiding principle for political activists, it is imperative for them that they do not break ranks. Consequently, for these individuals, opting to forgive or not, when their personal inclination contradicts the policy of the movement to which they belong, may lead them to experience a profound sense of conflict. Believing that they may be acting or behaving in a way that is a betrayal of all the values that they hold could be an additional form of trauma for them (Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004).

The authors also pointed out other dilemmas where forgiveness and the contexts of community and culture can create internal conflicts. Sometimes individuals are known to have expressed difficulties in personal decisions about forgiveness when the mood in the community was strongly for or against forgiveness. In cultural terms, where traditionally individuals are expected to avenge the death of a loved one, this might create anxieties or guilt when they are expected to offer forgiveness to perpetrators who are responsible for a loved one's ill treatment or death. Refusal to forgive may return a measure of power to the victim, but it may also take a psychological toll. Whilst these findings are helpful, not much is explained in terms of how these researchers collected and analysed their data. The study reads more like reflections on clinical work.

However, it has been valuable in bringing out aspects of the TRC's work that are not emphasised in other studies: in particular, the challenges and dilemmas faced by political activists in either proffering forgiveness or declining to forgive perpetrators of human rights abuses. Secondly, they note the role of vicarious forgiveness, which takes into account cultural differences in dealing with this challenge.

A study by Sonis et al. (2002) was quite similar to the studies by Kaminer et al. (2001) and Stein et al. (2008), and offered similar findings. The study was conducted with the primary objective of assessing how the experiences of submitting to and testifying before the Human Rights Violations Commission of the TRC affected victims' attitudes of forgiveness towards perpetrators. The study used a mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative methods, with focus groups and survey samples. Most participants were chosen through theoretical sampling. The survey questionnaire included a forgiveness scale that was adapted from the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), for use in the South African context. About 70 participants were recruited from the Gauteng areas (i.e. Soweto and the East Rand) and all had been part of the process of the TRC. The samples were chosen based on the criteria established by the TRC: exposure to the process of the TRC via being a direct victim (i.e. having personally suffered gross human rights violations), or an indirect victim (i.e. being a relative or close associate of a direct victim, such as mother, father, sibling or friend). Since most direct victims were normally young and/or male, most indirect participants were women.

Thematic analysis and statistical analysis were used to analyse data. The results revealed that victims initially supported the TRC concept of forgiveness based on the assumption that they would receive compensation and that the truth about their victimisation would be revealed, in exchange for providing the TRC with their stories and surrendering their demand for perpetrators to be punished. All too often, neither happened; consequently, victims regarded the TRC as serving the interests of perpetrators at the expense of victims. Other aspects of the TRC, particularly its amnesty and reparations policies, weighed heavily on the ability to forgive. The findings also revealed an expectation from the TRC for victims to forgive rather than their being provided with space to express feelings of anger and rage. The frustration that resulted from the government's failure to appreciate these concerns and its apparent sympathy towards perpetrators was found to play a huge role in inhibiting forgiveness.

Clearly the researchers of this study (Sonis et al., 2002) were hoping to contribute to the body of literature that has begun to shed light on the contours and dynamics of political forgiveness and to posit that key issues remain undeveloped, such as the ways in which forgiveness can be promoted, and ways of reducing obstacles and resistance to forgiveness in a cultural and socio-psychological framework.

Though the methodology and method were very clear, the first authors (who analysed the data) did not speak the local language of the participants and so had to make use of interpreters as well as moderators in both focus groups and surveys, thereby potentially missing nuances in the language. Like the research reviewed previously, this study was conducted a few years after the TRC closed its offices, so the findings related to the more immediate aftermath of the process. To offer a constructive addition to the emergent field of inquiry, as mentioned above, will require long-term examination of the TRC processes and how they affected victims who interacted with them. My study will address that gap.

In her analysis of transcripts of the human rights violations hearings, Chapman (2007) found that the hearings supported the position of the critics of the TRC's efforts to promote forgiveness. One of the most striking findings from the analysis of the empirical data is the relatively small number of the deponents in the human rights violations hearings who even mentioned the subject of forgiveness, or viewed the TRC process as being directly related to the topic of promoting forgiveness. For example, the author found that out of 429 deponents, only 72 discussed the topic of forgiveness and the majority who talked about forgiveness did so critically. They were either unwilling to forgive or they set conditions for forgiveness that the TRC was unlikely to meet. Only seven (2 per cent of the sample) who testified were ready to forgive unconditionally, although these did not necessarily express what could be considered a strong inclination to forgive (Chapman, 2007). Chapman (2007) also includes reference to a focus group study convened in conjunction with the American Association for the Advancement of Science/Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. A few of the participants indicated that they were motivated to testify by their interest in forgiving and reconciliation. However, such themes were discussed by just two of seven focus groups and then only briefly. According to the participants' recollections, other concerns were far more important in making decisions about whether to testify or not; these included

truth finding, sharing their stories in public and being given public acknowledgment, restoration of dignity, encountering perpetrators, receipt of reparations, finding out why the atrocities happened in the first place and addressing the emotional scars (Chapman, 2007).

Chapman asserts that deponents who came to the public hearings were more oriented to truth and justice than to forgiveness and reconciliation. Although the sample in this study is not representative of the general population, it may be thought surprising that so many survivors did not consider forgiveness.

Not much is revealed by Chapman (2007) as to the empirical steps taken in terms of methodology, method and analysis. It is not clear whether co-researchers worked together to increase the confirmability of the transcript analysis or the focus group data. As in the research reviewed previously, the focus group study was undertaken shortly after the closure of the TRC hearings and only addressed short-term reflections and consequences. Why so many survivors failed even to discuss forgiveness was not fully established. The chapter reads rather like an opinion piece by the author examining the attitudes of deponents towards forgiveness from transcripts received from the TRC and from focus groups, although she clearly raises critical issues about deponents' attitudes towards forgiveness.

In summary, it does appear from the data and analysis reviewed above that the severity of human rights violations underscores the limitations of the South African TRC in promoting forgiveness. Whilst these surveys and qualitative studies may not be representative of the attitudes of all former victims or relatives of victims of political violence, they certainly do provide evidence that truth commissions may not offer appropriate mechanisms to effect forgiveness on either an interpersonal or a broader social level. 'Indeed perfunctory or ineffectual efforts to encourage forgiveness are likely to be counterproductive' (Chapman, 2008: 76).

### **2.3.2 Truth leading to reconciliation**

The slogan for the South African TRC was 'Reconciliation through Truth' (Asmal et al., 1996) and its aim was post-apartheid nation building (Wilson, 2003). Despite this, 'very little is known about the impact of truth-telling or truth seeking on peace' (Mendeloff,

2004: 361), even though the idea that truth leads to reconciliation is recurrent within extant transitional justice literature. Hamber, Nageng and O'Malley (2000) contend that, like forgiveness, the concepts of healing, truth, justice and reconciliation are interrelated and that it can be too complex and confusing to separate them. However, in this section I shall try to look at the attempts made by various studies on transitional justice and truth commissions to link truth and reconciliation.

Clark (2012) contends that there are many unsubstantiated presuppositions regarding relationships between truth and reconciliation in the South African TRC process. A quantitative study by Gibson in 2000–1 based on a national survey of 3,727 South Africans investigated whether truth contributed to reconciliation in SA. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews. To measure the target variables, he developed a Reconciliation Index (composed of nine statements regarding people's feelings about 'the opposite racial group') and a Truth Acceptance Index (consisting of five statements relating to apartheid) and examined whether and to what extent his respondents agreed with these statements (Gibson, 2004). He argued that truth could provide a collective memory that would promote reconciliation among previously divided social groups, and in support he reported positive correlations in these measures, although not amongst South African black participants. It must be noted that this study has arguably limited relevance, as it focused on truth concerning apartheid rather than gross human rights violations, and because participants were from the general population rather than people who gave testimony about human rights violations to the TRC. No deeper exploration of the meaning of truth about conflict and abuse was undertaken, 'truth' being understood as uncontested 'facts'.

The ability of the South African TRC to deliver 'macro-truth' has been criticised (Chapman & Ball, 2008). However, there is relatively little research into deponents' own attitudes towards truth and reconciliation. Clark's (2012) research stands out as the most relevant to this topic, and to the research reported in this study.

Clark's research (2009a, 200b) focused on the International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) for the former Yugoslavia and its impact on interethnic reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). Her research problematised the assumption that truth commissions promote reconciliation by establishing the truth. She also suggested that this relationship is unlikely to be static but rather is prone to change over time – a reflection

that reconciliation is a process. The complexity of defining 'truth' in this political and historical context suggests that qualitative research is needed into deponents' experiences during and after giving testimony to the TRC. Moreover, there is value to the researcher being an 'insider' who will engage in a more social constructionist way by embedding herself/himself in the study and using reflexivity to identify and deal with challenges of such research.

Clark (2012) drew upon 15 semi-structured interviews conducted in SA between July and August 2010. Interviews were conducted much later than previous studies in this field of enquiry, which has particular relevance to the research being reported in this thesis. Purposive sampling strategy was used specifically to find two types of interviewee. Firstly, the study recruited those involved with the TRC process in a professional capacity: a prior TRC commissioner and previously a president of the Black Sash anti-apartheid movement; an academic professor and director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation; a priest who had previously been bombed by the apartheid security police; a judge who was involved in drafting the constitution for the Government of National Reconciliation (GNR); and last, but not least, a director of Khulumani support group. The second group of interviews were all direct victims of human rights violations who testified to the TRC process (though not all in person) and who were based in Kwa-Zulu Natal. In contrast, the members of the first group came from various parts of SA.

Findings in this study revealed that the passage of time had given the professional 'elite' interviewees a greater appreciation of the TRC's strengths and a deeper understanding of its flaws and shortcomings. For those who had testified to the TRC, in contrast, their disappointment with the TRC process had increased over the years as their many expectations – particularly in respect of reparations and experiencing fundamental changes in their everyday lives – had remained largely unfulfilled.

Two limitations of the study were observed by the author. Firstly, she considered that the sample was too small and was not representative. Only four people were interviewed who actually testified to the TRC (three through written statements). Clark experienced the Khulumani support group through which participants were recruited, as exercising a very strong gate-keeping role, limiting access. Safety was another consideration limiting interviewing. However, the author conceded that the study did



not seek to offer broad-based conclusions vis-à-vis the relationship between truth and reconciliation; it was an exploratory study and was valuable in raising questions that require further investigation.

The second potential limitation was that the study was undertaken in 2010, 12 years after the TRC officially completed its work. This meant that memories may have faded about the process itself. Yet this is also a strength, as reconciliation takes time and 'some of the benefits (and costs) of the process may only be seen in decades to come' (Hamber, 2002: 64; cited in Clark, 2012: 192). Over time, for example, with the benefit of historical distance, people may have become more or less disillusioned with the TRC.

It can be concluded that this was a very interesting study which appears similar in some ways to the study that will be reported in this thesis. However, as will be described in Chapter 3, my study was based on a much larger sample of deponents, who gave testimony in person and who represented a much wider range of experiences of human rights violations. Clark's study was qualitative in nature, and used semi-structured interviews, although very few details of the data collection process are included in the paper (such as the topic guide for the interviews). Clark (2012) does not state what type of analysis was used, nor what checks were in place to ensure rigour.

In summary to this section, there have been a variety of opinion pieces exploring whether reconciliation in a fractured society is promoted by uncovering truth (e.g. Chapman & Ball, 2008). Chapman (2008) contends that in principle the process of establishing a shared truth that documents the causes, nature and extent of severe and gross human rights violations (and/or collective violence under antecedent regimes), clearly constituted a prerequisite for achieving accountability, meaningful reconciliation and a foundation for the future. Archbishop Tutu stated in his well-known foreword to the Commission's five-volume report, 'reconciliation is not about being cosy; it is not about pretending that things were other than they were. Reconciliation based on falsehood, on not facing to reality is no true reconciliation and will not last' (Tutu cited in Chapman, 2009: p92). However, research into deponents' experiences and understandings of the truth-reconciliation relationship is limited, with accounts taken from very few people who gave testimony to the TRC. This limited evidence indicates that deponents' disillusionment may have increased over time and that individual

understandings of past events may not concur with the ‘macro-truth’ sought by the TRC, and may not be consignable to some past, ‘finished’ experience. Individuals’ experiences may be far removed from social truths and political attempts to heal long-standing social divisions and oppression.

### **2.3.3 Amnesty – the price for peace**

In this section I will discuss a few studies that have examined the effects on victims of knowing that amnesty was granted to perpetrators, some of whose atrocities have been viewed as just too grievous to be forgiven.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines ‘amnesty’ as a ‘general pardon especially for political offences’. Some truth commissions outside SA have dealt with the issue of amnesty differently, imposing different conditions for granting it. For instance, in some Latin American countries, such as Chile, blanket amnesty was granted to most generals involved in violations of human rights, whilst in SA and other countries, amnesty had conditions attached to it (Hamber, 2009). For example, perpetrators had to make full and politically motivated disclosures of their crimes before amnesty could be awarded.

SA’s version of an amnesty has been identified as legally the most stringent and politically the most legitimate of amnesties granted in transitions to democracy over a period of more than 30 years. In spite of this, however, the work of the Amnesty Commission has been the subject of intense scrutiny and critique since its earliest days (Chapman, 2008; see also Hamber & Wilson, 2002; Mamdani, 2005).

Hayner (2000) posits that the greatest innovation of the South African TRC, and the most controversial of its powers, was its ability to grant individual amnesty for politically motivated crimes committed between 1960 and April 1994. She argues that, given the detailed public disclosure that was required to gain amnesty for most brutal and horrific crimes, it was clear that this truth-for-amnesty offer would only be taken up by those who feared prosecution.

This view has been supported by many victims/survivors who felt that some perpetrators had committed such horrendous crimes that they deserved to be prosecuted rather than ‘let off the hook’. Apart from believing that the ‘TRC bent backwards for alleged perpetrators at the expense of victims/survivors’ concerns’

(Hamber, 2002: 73), victims were angered by the TRC's willingness to extend the dates by which perpetrators had to submit applications for amnesty. Many victims felt that perpetrators should have been prosecuted for failing to submit in good time. The amnesty report was submitted only in 2005, long after the TRC hearings closed their doors (Hamber, 2002).

Hamber's (2002) study was conducted between January and May 1998, immediately after the TRC had ended its public hearings. Twenty members of Khulumani were recruited in Soweto, Mamelodi and the East Rand townships and Vaal regions in Gauteng. The research was qualitative and focused on the psycho-social impact of the TRC on survivors. Data were collected and analysed using content analysis. Whilst several areas of participants' lives were explored, relevant to this section are participants' perceptions about amnesty. There were three main responses to the question: 'how do you feel about amnesty?' Most felt that amnesty was unfair, whilst others could not understand it or felt confused, and the rest felt that it was wrong. Hamber contends that in general there was an overwhelming uniformity in the responses, and regardless of whether respondents felt that amnesty was unfair to victims or incompatible with justice, or even if they were simply confused by the process, no one supported it. In addition, the author argues that the process of amnesty seems to have ignited a flame of anger and bitterness that might (or might not) have been extinguished if some form of prosecution process, even limited, had been undertaken (Hamber, 2002: 33).

Hamber (2002: 73) argues that the entire justification for amnesty was often unacceptable to many victims and that bringing perpetrators to justice is an important and sometimes essential component of a victim's recovery and psychological healing. In addition, perpetrators were not required to make a formal apology or show remorse in order to be granted amnesty, which influenced the survivors' attitudes and the inclination to forgive.

Phakathi and van der Merwe (2008) attempted to shed some light on the ability of the TRC to navigate this compromise agreement, particularly in its handling of the amnesty process. The authors researched the impact of the amnesty process on survivors of human rights violations. The study was qualitative and an interview schedule was designed to solicit perspectives of survivors who testified to the TRC amnesty

hearings. The interview covered themes such as truth-seeking, healing, justice, reconciliation and survivors' future needs. In total, 45 participants were recruited from the Gauteng, Western, Eastern and Southern Cape and all were members of the Khulumani support group, 42 blacks and 3 whites. Of these 27 were survivors of human rights violations and had testified at the TRC hearings. The data were analysed thematically.

Although survivors perceived the amnesty committees' work as an important input, they expressed serious reservations about the process and generally felt their main needs were not addressed. Amongst other things they did not feel they were presented with a clear or sufficient picture of the truth. The authors contend that, whilst these concerns were not shared by all those in the study, they have been substantiated as valid and common by other commentators, lawyers representing survivors and perpetrators, as well as the TRC staff themselves.

The study by Phakathi and van der Merwe (2008) seems to have been comprehensive in terms of methodology and method, but it suffers from similar weaknesses to the studies previously considered: the lack of embeddedness of the researchers in the research and thereby the potential difficulty of co-constructing realities with participants. Ontological perspectives were not explicated and the analysis process is unclear. The year of data collection is also unclear, so it cannot be ascertained whether participants were appraising their experiences soon or sometime after their TRC appearance. The researchers' experience (i.e. reflexivity) does not appear in this report, so there is no indication of how challenges in the research were met. A positive aspect of the study is that it managed to recruit a relatively large sample for a qualitative study and obtained some diversity in terms of gender, political affiliation and type of victimisation, although, not surprisingly, it failed to diversify in terms of race, as only three whites were recruited. The study states that, although most victims were black, most perpetrators who applied for amnesty were also black, and as a result the issue of 'black on black' violence came to the fore.

In summary, various authors have argued that the crucial element in transitional justice processes is amnesty, especially in instances of negotiated settlements, to achieve a means for polarised communities to work together, to recognise that blame was shared among various social groups ('even-handedness') and ultimately to achieve

democracy (Gibson, 2006). The fact that both sides of the political struggle – the National Party, on the one hand, and the liberation forces of the African National Congress, the Inkatha Freedom Party and the United Democratic Front (UDF) on the other – had been accused of human rights violations made it easier to apportion blame on both sides, as Archbishop Tutu had hoped: ‘the TRC would practise neither impunity nor vengeance’ (Mamdani, 2002: 33).

Gibson (2006) argues that amnesty did much more by humanising the victims of the terrible deeds committed during the struggle over apartheid, making co-existence and tolerance (if not full reconciliation) more possible. The author argues that the most important aspect of the TRC process was that victims were given a voice – they were provided with the opportunity to come forward and tell their stories, to receive acknowledgement and, to some degree, a restoration of their dignity. Therefore victims were to some extent humanised by being validated.

Despite these positive arguments, evidence has shown that the general perceptions of amnesty and its process among those who gave testimony as survivors of gross human rights violations were negative and not conducive to the victims’/survivors’ wellbeing and welfare. Hamber (2002) argues that amnesty was the price paid for peace and that victims/survivors had no say in that agreement.

#### **2.3.4 Healing as a product of testimony**

Healing is a process of making whole, healthy or sound again. This section deals with the issue of ‘healing’ from the perspectives of survivors, considering if they experienced a positive change in their psycho-social wellbeing (e.g. healing) as a result of giving their testimony to the TRC hearings. In a similar way to forgiveness, the notion of healing is complex and has been looked at differently by different people based on their current psychological, emotional, economic and social status. Whilst the TRC aimed to promote national healing, there is more debate about whether individuals found the testimony-giving experience cathartic or in any other way healing on a personal level.

Hamber (2009) argues that, as a notion, healing has become a core part of the critical discussion about the process and impact of truth commissions and transitional justices. The Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995) which set up the TRC does

not mention 'healing', as TRC commissioner Wendy Orr has noted, yet the concept became an integral part of the TRC's discourse from early on (Orr, 2000).

One of the ways in which states have attempted to deal with the legacy of violent conflict has been within a therapeutic moral order and this has become a prominent framework since the advent of the South African TRC (Moon, 2009). As a result, the psychotherapeutic language of trauma, suffering, repression, denial, closure, forgiveness, truth revelation and catharsis has become established. From Moon's perspective, the language of amnesty has become very much linked to the healing properties of nation building. Therefore for political elites – that is, those with professional status, better resources and now political dominance – to be able to defend the replacement of retributive by restorative models of justice, strong justifications against the prosecution of perpetrators and defence for testimony by victims on therapeutic grounds needed to be made explicit.

Janine Clark (2012) contends that it is commonly held that telling one's story and sharing one's pain can bring relief, catharsis and closure. She argues that the South African TRC itself assumed that catharsis of some kind followed from speech, that speaking directly of sufferings sustained in the past might offer healing. Fiona Ross (2003) also explored these issues.

Hamber (1995) contends that the enormities of the impact of the violence in SA and the resultant psychological consequences for the individuals concerned have been fairly extensively documented. He argues that a thorough review of the psychological damage is difficult to assess in all cases of human rights violations, but that an emotional reaction can always be expected. The most widely researched individual consequence of an exposure to violence is so-called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is not the subject of this study. Much as Hamber (1995) advocates labelling and diagnosing what some might regard as psycho-social problems, most of the victims/survivors are opposed to their experiences being pathologised. From the outset, Khulumani members were adamant that their struggles should not be pathologised or labelled. They complained about the medicalisation of testimony and were angry that their suffering was being too easily recast as symptoms of psychological disease (Colvin, 2004). They were against their political complaints being turned into therapeutic challenges.

Although the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act did not mention healing as such, the language of the TRC was couched in biomedical and psychological metaphors when describing its work (Boraine & Levy, 1995; Boraine, 2000; Boraine et al., 2000). This produced the widespread view that the Commission was a mechanism designed to promote healing of the individual and social body, a perspective that Michael Ignatief (1996) has criticised on the basis that collectives are not equivalent to the individual psyche (Ross, 2003: 327). However, it was Nelson Mandela (1999) who decided that the ills of the past needed to be dealt with, lest they 'remain like festering sores' – a statement supported by Archbishop Tutu, who commented that 'we need to confront the beast of the past in the eye as it has an uncanny habit of returning to haunt us' (Tutu, 1999; 28). This is one of the reasons that I embarked on this study. As explained in Chapter 1, the idea of a single presentation to the TRC leading to healing was intriguing and personally challenging, and this motivated me to find out more.

In agreement with Hamber's (1995) views above, Minow (1998) largely endorses a collective model of national healing and the TRC version of reconciliation as therapy for a sick society. For her, whole nations can suffer from PTSD. She argues that addressing the national psyche is something that truth commissions can achieve (Minow, 1998). In line with this argument, Moon (2009) maintains that certain therapeutic truisms have gained political credence in post-conflict contexts since the work of the South African TRC, one being that the task of the post-conflict state is to attend to the psychiatric health of its citizens and the nation as a whole.

However, a further question arises from all studies that agree with the healing aspects of truth commissions: what actually are the qualities that drive and facilitate this healing process? Hayner (2002: 135) talks about 'a need to tell one's story'. According to her, truth commissions seem to satisfy – or at least begin to satisfy – a clear need of some victims to tell their stories and to be listened to. This need has led many victims/survivors often to put themselves at considerable risk to come forward. For instance, in Haiti hundreds of people lined up eagerly to tell their stories. In Guatemala, Hayner (2002) reported that a Guatemalan anthropological group, following a report on the exhumation of bones at massacre sites, called a meeting and was expecting fewer than a hundred people; instead 500 people arrived, which turned the meeting into a long series of testimonials. Hayner reports that this was true of Chile as well, when a

Chilean psychologist who worked with victims of political violence said that ‘a single act of recognising a person’s traumatic experience could be extremely important to their psychological healing’ (Hayner 2002: 137).

A similar story ran in SA. Hamber (2009) reported that when legislation for the truth commission was discussed and debated in 1994–5, a small group that sprang up to lobby for a stronger bill quickly turned into a support group, which was later to be called the Khulumani support group. Suddenly, Hamber recalled, dozens of people started having regular meetings and ‘everybody got up and told their story’.

Ross (2003) posits that in South African TRC testimonials, gross human rights violations were anticipated to serve as a mechanism for forging national unity, premised on a shared knowledge of suffering in the recent past. Thus in the Commission’s work, remembering and recounting experiences of violence was intended to operate as a prophylactic against violence, recalling the ‘never again’ mantra of so many Latin American truth commissions and other official investigations (Ross, 2003: 327). She argues that the Commission sought to restore dignity to those who had suffered, as directed by section 3c of the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act. Much of the TRC’s work was publicised in terms of giving voice to the voiceless, assuming an unproblematic link between voice and being heard. Ross argues that the linkage of self was anticipated through the equation of the speaking self with the healed self.

Thus the model assumed that what preceded the Commission’s work was voiceless and silent about the apartheid past. Ross (2003) argues that in reality much was already known about apartheid, told in diverse genres, in stories, songs, political rhetoric, magisterial orders, court cases, newspapers, scholarly work, parliamentary debates, at funerals, weddings, rallies and shebeens. In fact, it could be said that the social was political for black South Africans – from the moment an individual woke up in the morning to go to work in the heavily packed trains and dangerously driven taxis in the townships, to the moment an individual put his or her head on the pillow to sleep at night. Even at night, they might be humiliated by police who conducted regular night raids and roughly searched fathers and mothers in front of their children, for ‘dompas’ (passes), or turned the house upside down looking for illegal immigrants.

To support this notion of giving voice and being heard throughout the duration of the Human Rights Violations Committee (1996–8), victims were encouraged by means of



radio and newspaper adverts, posters, word of mouth and other sources to ‘come forward’ and relate experiences of harm (Ross, 2003). Individuals were invited to make depositions – ‘to tell their stories’, as common parlance had it – concerning gross violations of human rights. This process of soliciting and recording narratives of human rights violations, the process often described as ‘storytelling’, was constructed as an authentically African mode of communication. Therefore, Ross contends that commissioners and committee members frequently spoke of the healing power of storytelling. Here is what Archbishop Tutu, the TRC’s chairperson, said:

“Storytelling is central, not only to many religious practices in this country but also to the African tradition of which we are part of. Ellen Khuzwayo is quoted as saying ‘Africa is a place of storytelling. We need more stories, never mind how painful the exercise may be ... stories help us to understand, to forgive and to see things through someone else’s eyes.’” (Tutu, 1997: 7; quoted by Ross, 2003: 328)

In addition, the Commission used storytelling to ascertain ‘truth’:

“By telling their stories, both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multi-layered experiences of the SA story ... In the (South) African context, where value continues to be attached to oral traditions, the process of storytelling was particularly important. Indeed this aspect is a distinctive feature of the legislation governing the commission ... The Act explicitly recognised the healing potential of telling stories”. (Tutu et al., 1998, TRC Report, Volume One: 112)

Andrews (2003) argues that truth commissions not only act as conduits for collective memory, as individual stories are selected as being representative and come to frame the national experience; they also wield an important influence on which stories are told and how they are interpreted. In other words, “they both produce and are produced by grand national narratives and must be understood in the particular

context(s) in which they emerge and the particular goals, either implicit or explicit, which guide their work” (Andrews 2003: 46).

Humphrey (2003), on the other hand, argues that the victim-centeredness of the truth commission carries another cultural import: the idea that the individual’s social healing is possible through revelation – something that Ignatief (1996: 110) argues has become an ‘article of faith’ for personal therapy and social redemption in the secular world. Therefore the centrepiece of the truth commission is the victim of human rights abuse, whose experience of violence is their main source of truth evidence. So the truth of victims’ stories is determined by their empathic reception rather than by the burden of legal proof or judgment (Humphrey, 2003).

Again, Andrews has argued that telling stories and listening to stories is a key component of the journey to reconciliation, for it is in this exchange that individuals begin to make sense of their experiences, to understand, if not to condone, why things happened in the way they did (Andrews, 2003: 47), whilst in some studies (Clark, 2012) the idea of storytelling and truth telling as leading to reconciliation and consequently to healing has been problematised as not necessarily self-evident.

Adding to this belief, Moon (2006) contends that a narrative perspective is important because the South African TRC explicitly undertook the task of telling a story about SA’s transition from past violence to future reconciliation and argued that storytelling was fundamental to catharsis, healing and reconciliation on an individual and a national level (2006: 258).

Allan and Allan (2000) contend that giving testimony is a structured form of storytelling, and therapists working with survivors of human rights atrocities who have used a ‘testimony’ method as a psychotherapeutic intervention (Weine & Laub, 1995) report that it is successful. However, therapists differ from one another when they try to explain why talking about their experiences helps survivors resolve their traumas. Allan and Allan (2000) argue that postmodern narrative therapists (e.g. White & Epston, 1990) believe that people’s reality and the meaning they give to it influence how they interpret their experiences, the goals they set, their expectations and the way they interact with others. For them, reality is something the individual creates (constructivism), and meaning is the product of the social interaction (constructionism). Put very simply, if clients present their reality and receive feedback, this may give them another meaning

to their experience. If this leads to a more functional life, the experience will have been therapeutic (Allan & Allan, 2000: 469).

With that in mind I shall move to look at studies that have examined whether and how sharing narratives at the TRC led to healing, which is one of the issues that my study will attempt to establish.

De la Rey and Owens (1998) conducted a study, the focus of which was the topic of healing following presentation to the TRC. It is a qualitative study that has been selected due to its congruence with social constructionism, and is viewed as appropriate for exploring perceptions of healing in the truth and reconciliation processes. Two data sources were used in the study: testimony transcripts from public hearings of the TRC and transcripts from interviews conducted by one of the authors. This second part is similar to my study, which involved semi-structured interviews. However, de la Rey and Owens' sample size was small. Only five testimonies given to the TRC were analysed and interviews were conducted with two commissioners of the TRC and three members of NGOs who had worked with victims of human rights violations.

The nature of the data from these two sources differed in that the testimonies did not directly address healing processes, unlike the interviews. The authors valued this form of data triangulation. Due to the bulk of the data gathered, thematic analysis was conducted using a coding framework that emanated from the content of the data. The findings, results and discussions in this study were interwoven for continuity and, the authors contend, to allow for a more integrated presentation of the multiplicity of understandings of healing and their implications. The difficulty the authors encountered was the fact that they could not translate findings into a linear written form, as all the themes were integrally linked and influenced one another, and certain major themes such as healing exploded into myriad of subthemes and components, as has been found by other studies (Hamber, 1995, 1998; Kaminer et al., 2001; Kaminer, 2006; Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004; Ross, 2003; Sonis et al., 2002; Vora & Vora, 2004).

The authors report that there was much talk about suffering, with subthemes such as physical, mental and collective suffering in the data gathered. In the next theme, 'healing', with all its subthemes, participants invoked conceptualisations of suffering when talking about it. The central point of reflection in this article was the question of how people understood the notion of healing. In the different understandings of healing

expressed in the data, the foci were those of healing as a process: that is, as private, public, individual and collective.

All of the five testimonies analysed began with a reference to storytelling. This has been viewed as a complex process, one with many facets, intimately linked to acknowledgement, with one path to healing involving the search for a more 'truthful' picture of the past. A second theme was reparation. Cienfuegos and Monelli's approach (1983), symbolising the experience of suffering, can be important in healing. Whether reparations can be seen as a means of healing is questionable, but the healing aspect was made clear in some of the interview transcripts, which had statements such as 'there can be no reconciliation and healing before there is reparation'.

Support was another theme identified in the transcripts in bringing about healing. This included major sources of support such as psychological, medical, religious and traditional healing systems. Amongst these, counselling was perceived as problematic because professionals think about counselling within a pathology model rather than using a wellness model.

In conclusion, the authors believe that through the analysis of narratives, their study has illuminated understandings of healing expressed by various role-players in the TRC process. However, overall the narratives endorsed the findings reported by Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983) that testimony has significant therapeutic value for victims of political repression and torture. But whether the form of testimonies structured by the TRC process permitted sufficient time and space for effective expression is one of the questions awaiting an answer. As in all the studies previously reviewed, de la Rey and Owens (1998) believe that the TRC posed more questions than it offered answers, and brought to the fore a number of complexities and dilemmas, psychological, philosophical and legal, and at the same time had to deal with differing expectations, needs and wants. This is a relevant study which used mixed methods that helped to enrich it. However, it had similar limitations to the others in that it dealt with short-term perceptions of relatively few participants. Despite its ontological embeddedness in terms of the social constructionist methodology, reflexivity is not mentioned and consequently the rigour of the study can also be questioned.

In summary, de la Rey and Owen's study is one of the important studies that attempted to examine the TRC's claim that its processes helped victims/survivors realise

healing by participating in its processes. This is a claim I intend to examine in my study using principles of grounded theory methodology.

A study by Hamber, Nageng and O'Malley (2000) conducted between January and May 1998 with 20 members of the Khulumani victim support group at the end of the TRC's hearings, focused on survivors' perspectives of the TRC. It probed their feelings, thoughts and views both before and after interacting with the Commission. Whilst I want to focus on healing, this research showed that healing, truth, justice and reconciliation were interrelated. For survivors, the relationship amongst the concepts was not a linear, but a reiterative process, and uncovering truth did not necessarily lead to reconciliation. This was a qualitative study and participants were recruited using a purposive and snowballing sample from Khulumani branches, in Soweto, Mamelodi, the East Rand and Vaal regions in Gauteng. The criteria included a mix of people who had testified publicly and those who simply gave written statements to the TRC. The interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred languages, mainly Sotho, Zulu and Xhosa, whilst some were comfortable with being interviewed in English. Where necessary, interviews were translated into English during the interviews. Content analysis was used to analyse the transcripts and to scrutinise them for dominant themes. These were then counted and rates of occurrences of the different responses were tabulated in a report of frequencies. Where necessary, categories were synthesised and structured to form exhaustive classifications.

Hamber et al (2000) argued that when evaluating the work of the TRC, note should be taken of the inevitable shortfall of any legal or institutional response to the pain and psychological suffering engendered by a mass atrocity. Furthermore, Verwoerd (2000; cited in Hamber, 2000) noted that it would be a mistake to evaluate the TRC's single public hearings against the backdrop of an intimate long-term therapeutic psychological relationship which would provide security and containment of strong emotion. The TRC was a construct of the human mind, and was implemented by mere mortals who, despite (relatively) substantial resources, were inhibited by political and temporal restraints. Its fallibility was guaranteed from the outset (Hamber et al, 2000).

In its final report, the TRC acknowledged the 'healing potential of storytelling, of revealing the truth before a respectful audience and to an official body' (Tutu et al 1998b: 351). However, in the Hamber et al. (2000) study, even though half the

respondents felt that they benefited from the experience, the author cautions that the psychological gains of appearing before the TRC may well have been short term. Although shortly after the hearings (and the debriefing sessions offered by the TRC) most of the witnesses appeared to be psychologically intact, at times this outer composure simply masked deeper psychological issues that were sublimated during the adrenaline-filled and cathartic experience of testifying (Hamber, 1998). Hamber (1998) suggests, on the basis of contact with the Trauma Centre for Violence and Torture in Cape Town, that this is the reason why survivors and families of victims began to experience a considerable increase in psychological problems months after their testimony.

Such arguments about the need to follow up people who participated in the TRC many years later supports the study being reported in this thesis, which researched the long-term legacy of giving testimony.

A study that recruited participants some years later than those reviewed above was conducted by Picker (2005), through the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. This was a qualitative study with capacity to contribute to the understanding of complex social and psychological processes. Seven focus groups were used to gather data for the study. The focus groups were held in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. In order to get a range of perspectives, to reduce translation problems and to create more psychological security, participants were grouped on the basis of race (black African, white, coloured, Indian), gender and political affiliation (ANC, IFP). The study was developed and carried out by a research team, but the author conducted the data analysis alone, using qualitative content analysis. This method is based on the systematic collection of content-bearing statements, which are paraphrased and generalised to a more abstract level, eventually to construct inductive categories (Picker, 2005).

Although this study did not deal specifically with healing aspects of testifying before the TRC, one of the findings illuminated how storytelling was motivated by sharing one's pain and suffering, gaining acknowledgment, rectifying lies and, most needing to achieve closure and healing. The 'clandestine nature' of violations by repressive governments denies victims' stories and thus jeopardises survivors' own memory and sanity. In contrast, speaking out in a setting where the experience is

acknowledged can be 'restorative' (as described by Minow, 1998). A few participants perceived their public testimony as a means to 'close this chapter', thereby leading to healing (Minow, 1998: 329). However, like some studies already mentioned, this study poses more questions than it answers. As has been suggested already, it is not possible to distinguish some aspects of the TRC processes as they are intimately linked. As Picker (2005) reasoned, whether the 'human and civil dignity' of victims has been restored, and whether 'healing' has been achieved, are too simplistic questions. Restoration and healing are long processes that involve many different factors. While some victims saw the process as clearly beneficial or as harmful, most experienced it as a mixed blessing (Picker, 2005).

What is obvious in the findings of Picker (2005) is a need to undertake a much larger and more in-depth study that will examine perceptions of giving testimony looking back over a longer period of time. The short-term benefits, or lack of benefits, have now been relatively well documented, but it will be interesting to know how victims view the work of the TRC some years after its closure, especially those people whose situations have not improved since.

Van der Merwe, Baxter and Chapman (2009) report that research some years after the public hearings is valuable in showing how the hearings fit into a longer-term process addressing justice needs (involving investigations, amnesty and reparations), and in showing that the hearings cannot be evaluated without contextual understanding.

Van der Merwe, Baxter and Chapman (2009) supported these arguments by reference to a study conducted with witnesses at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) by Stover (2004). In this study, 87 witnesses were interviewed to assess their experience of participating in the process. The findings specifically questioned the therapeutic value of public testimony. Stover reported: 'the few participants who experience cathartic feelings immediately or soon after testifying before the ICTY found out that the glow quickly faded once they returned home to their shattered villages and towns' (Stover, 2004: 107). However, on the positive side, Stover found that witnesses believed that the trials served a purpose for society at large and for them as individuals (Stover, 2004: 118). Specifically, it provided them 'with a public forum where they could discharge their "moral duty" to "bear witness" on behalf of their deceased family members and neighbours'. It also provided an opportunity to confront

the perpetrators and to 'restore their confidence in the order of things' (Stover, 2004: 129). As with the South African TRC process, the question that is not asked is what the burdens are for relatives who are expected to forgive on behalf of the dead. As mentioned before, some cultures expect individuals to avenge the death of a relative. This may be another significant issue to consider in terms of long-term research.

Along similar lines, a study was conducted by Brounéus in April 2006 in Rwanda, at Avega, a widow's association in Kigali, after the 1994 genocide. Participants had testified to the Gacaca courts in Rwanda, which had been set up to promote transitional justice, with some functional parallels to the South African TRC. Sixteen women were recruited from this centre as they arrived to receive medical, psycho-social and/or economic assistance. An element of selection bias was evident in this selection, as counsellors approached women who were waiting for treatment. Their ages ranged from 27 to 67 with a mean of 44. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing the women to elaborate on issues as they wished, but still keeping the same key questions and focus across all interviews. Interviews were recorded following consent and permission to record. The participants were all widowed in the genocide, except three who were single women at the time and never married. Two had had children as a result of rape during the genocide and one had contracted HIV as a result of the rape, as had two widows. Only one had survived with all of her four children; the other women saw their children killed in the genocide. One woman, who had lost her seven children, had been unable to cry since 1994. The aim of the study was to learn more about how testifying in such a public event as the Gacaca affects psychological health: did the women find this experience healing or traumatising, or were there other issues involved? Analysis identified two themes: security problems as a result of giving testimony in Gacaca; and psychological ill-health.

Brounéus (2008) argues in this study that there has been an assumption that testifying in TRCs will be a healing experience for survivors. Healing has been a central concept in the general reconciliation literature and in political rhetoric around TRCs. However, on the basis of psychological research on one-session debriefing, she contends that there may be risks involved concerning the psychological health of women survivors who gave testimony in the Gacaca. These risks would be due to the short-term exposure to trauma that testifying involves, as well as to the vulnerable position of testifying in an



environment surrounded by family members of the perpetrators as well as the perpetrators themselves and in relation to sexual rape. In the South African TRC hearings, circumstances prevailed which were described by Wendy Orr (2000) as a 'tidal wave of emotions' – hardly an environment that could be described as cathartic or emotionally secure.

In this empirical examination of truth telling and healing, one of the most crucial issues emerging was insecurity as a result of the truth-telling process. For instance, once they had testified to the Gacaca, these women were subjected to threats, harassment and violence. They were attacked physically and psychologically, and their houses and crops abused. This finding was alarming, as security risks are not included in the theoretical literature about truth telling and reconciliation as result of the assumption that the country is at peace.

As regards the second theme, psychological ill-health, for all the women in the study, giving testimony involved intense psychological suffering. Five could not continue their testimonies due to *traumatisme* or severe psychological ill-health. Some experiences were so strong that it felt like the abuses were happening again. They had flashbacks of machetes, heard noises and smelled smells, or had other strong associations to the original trauma. Although the long-term effects were unknown at that stage, none of the women giving testimony considered it a healing experience. Therefore Brounéus contends that the basic assumption of truth telling as healing is thus very much challenged in this study.

Brounéus (2008) posits that findings indicate that culturally appropriate support is needed for survivors before, during and after the proceedings. In addition, she argues that there is reason to cease stating that the truth necessarily heals.

It may be that women in this study did not achieve healing because of the lack of factors conducive to forgiving, in contrast to the South African TRC. Although I am not assuming the complete success of the TRC, Rwanda's Gacaca process did not have leaders like Mandela and others to inspire them; the Gacaca did not have an Archbishop Tutu to influence the process through religious beliefs of forgiveness and the influence of Ubuntu principles. More importantly, perhaps, as Brounéus (2008) declared, some atrocities were too severe to be forgiven. This is why the Rwandan president responded to Archbishop Tutu's call for forgiveness by declaring that 'he and his people were ready

to forgive but even Jesus had declared that the devil could not be forgiven' (Tutu, 1999: 209). But I am also inclined to agree with Brounéus that healing cannot take place when the state is not at peace and when it cannot provide security for its citizens. In contrast, in SA, whilst there have been many accusations and considerable dissatisfaction with some aspects of the TRC process, after the fall of apartheid, reports indicated that most victims felt physically safe and at some stage expressed hope in the future, perhaps because of the bloodless and peaceful transition, and because the TRC bought peace with amnesty.

### **2.3.5 On-going grief and struggles with social identity**

In this section I will explore the issue of grief, its manifestation and its effects on victims who have been dissatisfied with the outcome of the TRC process. In so doing, I will also examine how grief is linked to perspectives of self-identity. I will try to explore studies that examine this emotion at some level.

Grief is defined by the *Little Oxford Dictionary* as 'sorrow or deep trouble'. In a more elaborate definition, grief has been described as a normal and multifaceted response to the loss of someone or something to which a bond was formed (Green, 2013). Although conventionally focused on the emotional response to loss, grief also has physical, cognitive, behavioural, social, spiritual and philosophical dimensions. Whilst the terms are often used interchangeably, 'bereavement' refers to the state of loss and 'grief' to a reaction to loss.

Greene (2013) posits that grief takes two guises: mourning and melancholia. However, the numerous synonyms for grief – sorrow, anguish, distress, heartache – would suggest that it is an emotion that can be experienced at different degrees of intensity (Greene, 2013) and in the more usual sense of the word, 'grief' can be thought of as a particular acute feeling of loss that is experienced in relation to the loss of a significant person in one's life (Greene, 2013; Eng & Han, 2000).

Whilst mourning might be viewed as normal, melancholia is often associated with pathological states, although Eng and Han (2000) have proposed a concept of melancholia as a depathologised structure of everyday group experience for Asian Americans. This, I believe, can be applied to other ethnic minorities such as Africans and

the West Indians in the UK and (majority) black Africans in the oppressive South Africa context.

I believe that blacks in SA have been in a state of mourning for many decades due to the policies of apartheid, which have been putting limitations and constraints on their everyday lives. As highlighted in Chapter 1, policies relating to pass laws, forced removals, curfews and, latterly, the state of emergency, which gave police and state military endless powers to deal with political activists in whatever ways they deemed fit, led to serious human rights abuses against black people in the country.

Legacies of colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid and recently the TRC have all had an adverse impact on people as physical, mental and spiritual beings, and have resulted in on-going mourning of loss, in terms of significant others, property and possessions, manhood and human-hood. This was confirmed way back in the late 1980s in a study and subsequent report written by Wilson and Ramphela (1989) for the second Carnegie Inquiry into 'Poverty and Development in Southern Africa'. They argued that, seen in its historical perspective, the election of the National Party in 1948 marked not so much a turning point in South African history as the intensification of a process which had been going on for 300 years.

Thus some of the peculiarities of the South African industrial revolution, such as the land laws and the migrant labour system, became even more firmly entrenched as part of the structure of apartheid, whilst some of its special features have roots that can easily be traced back to well before 1948. However, Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 204). contend that there is little doubt that it was some of the special policies pursued by the NP government that did so much to impoverish millions of black South Africans, in what may be described as 'apartheid's assault on the poor'.

Unfortunately, this is the legacy of apartheid SA that the TRC did not wish to include in its mandate, as lamented by Mamdani (2002) who argued that the TRC individualised the victims of apartheid. Although it acknowledged apartheid as a 'crime against humanity', by putting political activists at centre stage as victims its analysis reduced apartheid from a relationship between the state and entire communities to one between the state and individuals, thereby obliterating a central characteristic of the system (2002: 34).

The TRC hearings were identified as a means for the deponent to unburden grief (De la Rey & Owens, 1998; Chapman & van der Merwe, 2008; Gready, 2010). Furthermore, several studies have indicated that the TRC acted as a narrative or testimony therapy (as reviewed by Hamber, 2009), whilst others have disputed this fact. For example, Hamber (2009) argues that the TRC process was not 'testimony' or 'narrative' therapy even if it contained some elements of these. Because TRCs are shaped by political compromise, they are limited in what they can do psychologically. The past has a deep-rooted hold on survivors, as has been confirmed by the Rwandan president: some atrocities are just not forgivable. The question of whether the South African TRC has healed can be answered swiftly by saying that it did not for most survivors, whilst others might have experienced some kind of relief. Minow (1998: 33; posits that there certainly were what she called 'therapeutic moments'. But as the TRC's own report acknowledged, in many cases the experience of testifying or making statements 'initiated more than it closed' (Tutu 1998a: South African TRC Report Vol. 1: 367). Some survivors have been left frustrated, feeling psychologically vulnerable and used (Hamber, 2009: 72). Some testimonies were even blunted in translation, so that deep hurt and complex grief were obscured (Krog & Mpolweni, 2009).

Despite the assumption that giving testimony brought some immediate relief or unburdening of grief (Chapman & van der Merwe, 2008; Gready, 2010), no long-term follow-up studies have been located that seek to understand the role of the TRC process in subsequent grief work. A few studies appear to link grief work with peace work (de la Rey & Owens, 1998; Errante, 1999), but they do not analyse or present any details about their participants' longer-term experiences.

Current research literature neglects survivors' on-going experiences of grief and mourning. Understanding of such private and social processes requires examination of the identity of people who have undergone and are still undergoing or harbouring such negative feelings. Tajfel, 1979; cited by McLeod, 2008) describes social identity theory as 'a person's sense of how they are based on their group membership'. He posits that groups to which people belong are sources of pride, self-esteem and a sense of identity, a sense of belonging to the world. However, these groups also divide people into 'them' and 'us', and whilst they help us to understand differences, they can serve as processes of stereotyping and discrimination.

There is no other place in which this form of perception has been more poignant than in the South African context, where the majority of the population – that is, blacks – have been subjected to this kind of stereotyping, which has resulted in the reduction of people to the level of a subspecies in the grand scheme of apartheid. This may have influenced the arguably unsuccessful way in which the TRC has dealt with survivors' human rights abuses. Belonging to a very low-status group tends to reduce the self-esteem of its members, resulting in very low levels of identity. For instance, for survivors of human rights abuses, their social status in the scheme of things has been continuously compromised by the effects of colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, apartheid and recently the TRC. This means that they are unable to compare themselves favourably with other groups and are therefore unable to maintain their self-esteem.

The terms 'self-esteem' and 'self-concept' have often been used interchangeably (Robinson, 1995). However, self-esteem (or self-worth) has been shown to be one component of self-concept (see, for example, Rosenberg et al, 1995), with self-esteem being an evaluative component and self-concept being descriptive. For example, the fact that black children and adults are aware that they are black is part of the self-concept, but their evaluations of their racial characteristics are part of their self-esteem.

Black identity has been discussed extensively in the social science literature, using various terms and measures. A group of theories have been put forward to explain identity developments of blacks, and have invoked the concept of self-hate and low esteem. Tajfel unequivocally states that 'There is a good deal of evidence that members of groups which have found themselves for centuries at the bottom of the social pyramid sometimes display the phenomenon of "self-hate" or "self-depreciation" (Tajfel, 1982: 12).

For example, victims/survivors of human rights abuses have already viewed themselves as marginalised through the different legacies of the apartheid system, culminating in the failure of the TRC to deliver – the TRC being perceived by most as their last hope against the onslaught on the poor by the apartheid system (Wilson & Ramphela, 1989). Consequently, this failure to be treated fairly, and with respect and dignity, is bound to have had a negative impact not only on the survivors' self-esteem/concept but also on their psyche, which is what this thesis is attempting to examine.

Robinson (1995) contends that the mainstream view of black identity has a number of variants; but the basic model is that living in a racist white society, where blacks are viewed and treated as inferior and where they are held in poverty and powerless communities, leads blacks early in life to internalise negative beliefs and feelings about themselves and other blacks. Consequently, 'the underlying assumption is that exposure to racism and oppression has damaged black persons' psychological make-up and this is reflected in their conceptions of self' (1995: 91).

The two main groups of studies in this area were those based on intensive clinical material and those based on empirical studies with young children, mostly around their choices of and reactions to black and white dolls (Robinson, 1995). These latter studies were particularly influential in promoting the view that black identity implied self-hatred (Robinson, 1995). Since the 1960s several studies have contradicted these studies and subsequent ones. However, the purpose of this section is not to conduct an in-depth discussion about black identities per se, but to highlight the possibility that people who have been subjected to on-going repression and one disappointment after another may view themselves negatively. Implications for practice mean that social workers (and researchers) must become constantly and consciously aware of and use reflexivity in their desire to assist and deal with the suffering to which poor people are subjected. In terms of research, it is important that the long-term impact of the TRC's processes is examined, using tools that are relevant, contextual and culturally based. It is also important to bear in mind that it is not possible to understand individual reactions to giving testimony without acknowledging the ways in which wider historical and social influences shaped the meanings of these events and the resources and needs that people brought to the TRC.

## **2.4 Conclusions to the literature review**

The South African TRC offers one example of a restorative justice approach to healing opposing factions within a country and establishing peace, through a process of publicly bearing witness to the testimony of victims of gross human rights violations and offering amnesty to certain perpetrators. There has been recognition of the need to adopt a victim-centred perspective on the TRC process and its aftermath (Doak, 2011), yet there

has been relatively little research into the experiences of those who gave testimony. Whether deponents' expectations were met by the TRC process is ambiguous at best, in terms of current knowledge.

This literature review has focused on deponents' experiences and understandings of forgiveness, truth telling, amnesty and healing within the TRC process. Grief work was noted as a potentially important issue but one that has been largely neglected in previous studies.

The offering of explicit forgiveness by victims towards perpetrators was strongly advocated by religious and political leaders. Yet it is unclear if reconciliation between rival social factions requires individual victims/survivors to forgive the deeds of individual perpetrators. Limited research, carried out by surveys, interviews and focus groups, indicates that many of those giving testimony to the South African TRC did not feel able to offer forgiveness, despite feeling some coercion to do so. Limited evidence suggests that those who expressed forgiveness felt that they had been given more respect, attention and acknowledgement of their suffering during the TRC hearing. Some withheld forgiveness, feeling that the perpetrators had been unfairly offered sympathy and amnesty by this transitional justice process (Sonis et al., 2002).

Concerns exist over what is meant by truth telling in the TRC context. The aim of the TRC was to establish a 'macro-truth', which does not necessarily equate with the individual experiences of victims/survivors. Whilst survivors often appeared at the TRC in order to uncover truth about the deaths and disappearance of loved ones, in particular, it appears that some have expressed disappointment with the outcomes in the longer term (Clark, 2012).

Healing social rifts and promoting reconciliation were clearly aims of the TRC process, but it has been supposed in addition that individuals would experience 'healing' through giving testimony. Limited studies question the assumption that giving testimony is a cathartic or psychologically healing experience. Indeed, some deponents experienced re-traumatisation at recounting their experiences of gross human rights violations, and reported increased psychological distress afterwards (Hamber et al., 2000; Brounéus, 2008). A need for follow-up mental health support services has been recognised (Hamber, et al 2000). Although the expression of grief has been described as potentially healing (e.g. Chapman & van der Merwe, 2008; Gready, 2010), there appears

to have been no previous research exploring this specific topic with deponents who gave testimony to the TRC. The function of mourning and melancholia in the social identity of a repressed people has not been considered.

A few authors have argued that the longer-term legacy of giving testimony to the TRC deserves exploration (Van der Merwe et al., 2009; Stover, 2004), and yet only Clark (2012) appears to offer this longer-term, evidence-based perspective.

Previous research shares some common limitations. Many articles are based on clinical work or are opinion pieces. Psychologists dominate research and theorising. Even in some of the research studies, relatively little detail is included about methods of data collection and/or analysis (e.g. Abrahamsen et al 2005; Chapman, 2007; Backer, 2010; Clark, 2012). Researchers have tended not to share participants' language but to rely on translators, potentially losing the nuances in the collected narratives, and perhaps lacking the rapport that can be gained from having an 'insider' perspective. The studies have tended to be based on small samples (e.g. four deponents interviewed by Clark, 2012; five deponents interviewed by de la Rey & Owens, 1998). Only Phakathi and Van der Merwe (2008) had a relatively large sample for a qualitative study of 27 survivors, albeit a study on structured interviews, that might have lost richness and individual narratives. Studies tend to have neglected the accounts of the most disadvantaged group of people who gave testimony. Rather, more expert or advantaged participants within the TRC process have been accessed, such as commissioners (e.g. Clark, 2012; Ross, 2003). Whilst some studies have been conducted by multiple researchers, their role in ensuring the rigour of data analysis has not been described clearly. Although there is some recognition that the longer-term legacy of giving testimony warrants attention, there has been very little follow-up research, Clark (2012) being one exception.

Given these gaps in published evidence, the following research objectives are justified:

- to explore the multiple personal, social and political events that led participants to testify to the TRC;
- to analyse the participants' reported consequences of testifying before the TRC;



- to describe and understand the experiences of the survivors' preparation for appearing before the TRC;
- to analyse the extent to which appearing before the TRC impacted on the wellbeing of survivors of human rights violations in the long term;
- to explore the participants' experiences of forgiveness, reconciliation, amnesty and healing.

The next chapter describes in detail the methodology and method adopted for this study.

## Chapter 3      Methodology and method

### 3.1 Methodology

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

The importance of the researcher discerning a personal philosophical position before they begin to conceptualise a research study is highlighted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 22): ‘all research is interpretive; is guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Some beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, whereas others are highly problematic and controversial’

With that in mind, in this chapter I shall try to explain my motivations for carrying out this study and why I chose a qualitative research approach. I shall then describe in detail the ‘Ubuntu’ philosophy which has guided me throughout life on how to view and understand the world that I see and interact with. In addition, my epistemological as well as ontological perspectives will be made clear.

My study focuses on the experiences of survivors of human rights violations in apartheid South Africa, how they managed the experience of appearing before the TRC, and what they understood as the shorter-term consequences and longer-term meanings of giving their testimonies. Willig (2001) suggests that to be clear about the objective of our research we need to have a sense of what kinds of things it is possible for us to find out. In other words, we need to adopt an epistemological position (see also Flick, 2009). Epistemology attempts to provide answers to the question ‘How and what can we know?’ and this involves thinking about the nature of knowledge itself, about its scope and about the validity and reliability of claims to knowledge (Willig, 2008: 2).

Due to the nature of the atrocities perpetrated towards victims/survivors of human rights violations in SA, and the interest generated by the TRC which took responsibility for investigating the extent and nature of these atrocities, I have been compelled to take a closer look at the motivations that have impelled me to take on this study. Thus reflexivity is an important element of this research. Equally, I had to take a

closer look at my position in terms of how and what knowledge I wished to glean from the research. In order for me to justify the way I have answered my research questions, I have considered different epistemologies from positivism to social constructivism.

For example, my research questions are centred on survivors' experiences following presentation to the TRC; it made sense for me to choose qualitative research methods to carry out my study. Willig (2008: 20) has this to say about qualitative research questions: 'That they identify the process, object or entity that the research wants to investigate and because good qualitative research questions tend to be process orientated they point us in the direction without predicting what we may find and ask how something happens rather than what happens'.

### **3.1.2 What are qualitative approaches?**

Qualitative methods refer to a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative findings are generally presented in everyday language and often incorporate participants' own words to describe a psychological event, experience or phenomenon (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; cited in Ponterotto, 2005).

I have chosen a qualitative research methodology for my study to uncover or co-construct the nature of the experiences of giving testimony amongst the victims of human rights violations in SA. As a South African myself, I had become intrigued about how these victims/survivors of human rights violations have made sense of their experiences, how they perceive themselves and how they have made sense of what that means. As an insider/outsider, I have had difficulties in understanding how atrocities of such magnitude could possibly be forgiven, let alone reconciled with. I believe that victims' constructions reflect their understanding of their experiences as well as the diverse situations in which they find themselves. But we would be taking this journey together, in so far as I could assist participants in making sense of the meanings they attached to their experiences.

Qualitative research in its many forms is concerned with meaning, how people make sense of the world (and themselves), and how they experience events (as well as inner processes of change). Such methods aim to understand 'what it is like' to

experience particular situations (Creswell, 2012; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Ponterotto (2005: 125) contends that qualitative methods refer to a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of participants in a context-specific setting. Qualitative research is therefore concerned with the quality and texture of the experience, rather than with the identification of cause–effect relationships or ‘variables’ defined by the researcher before the research process begins. Therefore I see qualitative methods as valuable for my study as their data collection techniques need to be participant-led or bottom-up, allowing participants’ meanings to be heard (Willig, 2008: 8). But this is also in line with my suggestion of using emancipatory approaches to understanding the experiences of the ‘marginalised’ victims of human rights violations in SA as described in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The bottom-up approach has been important for the South African TRC in placing victims/survivors at the centre of its functioning.

In addition, qualitative methods would allow me to distinguish differences amongst participants’ experiences which might help to enrich and diversify the study. Espin (1993) pointed out that postmodern understanding of the multiplicity of realities that constitute the reality of the world leave no room for naïve descriptions of people, the world or human life, which incorporate only one perspective on that reality. That is why it is important for me as a black, female South African, albeit currently an outsider, in conducting this study. This is important because it privileges me: as mentioned previously, most of the previous research on the meanings of the TRC has been done by ‘foreigners’, mainly European whites, some with no experience of apartheid whatsoever. This presents a potential limitation on interpretation, as suggested by Libin (2003), because there is a growing understanding of postcolonial theory as a discourse haunted by the trauma of colonialism – a discourse permeated with traces of European guilt and indigenous victimisation. It would also be important for me to acknowledge the position of privilege that I already occupy as a Third World professional/scholar based in the West, while I continue to hold on to the notion that the position I represent is also marginal in some respects. In this sense I do not make any claims to represent the ‘subaltern’, as Spivak (1994) warns us not to, but I do aim to interpret and explain the concerns of marginal people: that is, the victims/survivors of human rights violations in SA (Libin, 2003).

Despite there being several and differing major interpretative paradigms available, a broad definition of qualitative research has been offered, as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 3). My hope in conducting this study was that the voice of the silent and marginalised would be heard in the form of the public report that would be written on completion of the study, at which point implications for practice might be clearly highlighted. It is also my wish that the report will be used to help pursue participants’ wishes in their struggles to survive.

Denzin and Lincoln (2004: 37) argue that “all qualitative researchers are philosophers in that universal sense in which all human beings ...are guided by highly abstract principles” (quoting Bateson, 1972: 320). These beliefs combine beliefs about ontology (the nature of reality); epistemology (the relationship between knower and known) and methodology (how we know the world or gain knowledge of it) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). These beliefs shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it. Denzin & Lincoln (2004) describe the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises as a net, paradigm or interpretive framework, or a ‘basic set of beliefs that guides action’ (Guba, 1990: 17).

### **3.1.3 Social constructionism and Ubuntu**

As it would have been impossible for me to situate myself outside the subject matter of the South African victims’ experience, due to the fact that my study relies heavily on socio-economic conditions, and historical and cultural narratives of victims’ lived experiences, I had to understand the concept of social constructionism. In addition, social constructionism shares some similarities with my own ontological view of ‘Ubuntu’, in that both assume that human action depends on the meanings people ascribe to their situations, these meanings being derived from shared interactions, with language as pivotal (Charmaz, 1990, 2000, 2008). Ubuntu refers to one’s consciousness of being human and part of a wider human community; more specifically, it is an African principle meaning humanness in community itself (Motsemme, 2004; Murithi, 2006;

Krog, 2009). It therefore emphasises co-existence, co-operation, mutual understanding and respect, compassion, restorative rather than retributive justice, reconciliation rather than estrangement of disputants, civility, mutual tolerance, conversation and communication in all its varied forms – all the attributes employed by the TRC to facilitate the smooth handover of political power with a view to peaceful co-existence. One of the principles of Ubuntu, which favours face-to-face encounters of disputants with a view to resolving differences rather than achieving victory for the most powerful, accords very well with the TRC's objectives. Archbishop Desmond Tutu offered the following definition:

a person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed. (Tutu, 1999:35)

Put simply, Ubuntu is: 'I am what I am because of who we all are' (from a definition offered by Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee).

My principal enthusiasm for linking social constructionism with some aspects of Ubuntu has already been implied by other authors (e.g. Murithi, 2006; Swanson, 2008; Krog 2009): that Ubuntu, like language, played a pivotal role in the process of the South African TRC.

Social constructionism has become increasingly influential and offers the perspective that human experience is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically (Willig, 2008). This means that what we perceive and experience is never a direct reflection of environmental conditions, but must be understood as a specific reading or interpretation of these conditions. Language is the most salient aspect of socially constructed knowledge, as has already been alluded to. Willig (2008) argues that research from a social constructionist perspective is concerned with identifying the various ways of constructing social reality that are available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use and trace their implications for human experience and social practice. For instance, social constructionist researchers in psychology have critically

examined psychological categories such as 'emotion' (Harré, 1986), or 'psychopathy' (Parker et al., 1995) to show how they provide a way of constructing a shared reality rather than simply reflecting it (Willig, 2008: 7).

Social constructionism recognises Kant as its intellectual progenitor (Young & Collin, 2004; Mahoney, 2004), but contrasts with his thinking in having a social rather than an individual focus. Generally put, social constructionism contends that knowledge is sustained by social processes and that knowledge and social action go together. Within the Ubuntu tradition, communication and engaging people in dialogue are central to the success of its functioning.

Ontologically, social constructionism is generally understood to be anti-essentialist and anti-realist (Burr, 2003), although some argue that social constructionism and realism are two sides of the same coin (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Epistemologically, social constructionism asserts that knowledge is historically and culturally specific (Willig, 2008); that language constitutes rather than reflects reality and is both a precondition for thought and a form of social action; and that the focus of inquiry should be on interaction, process and social practice (Young & Colin, 2004: 377).

A social constructionist epistemology was appropriate when analysing the meanings of giving testimony for participants looking back over many years, in order to move beyond the assumption that participants were recalling straightforward 'facts', to understanding that they were constructing nuanced and evolving interpretations of their experience. This was also compatible with my social work practice.

One of the greatest strengths of social work is that it not only tries to give voice to the marginalised and silenced, but essentially has been trying to recognise the subjectivity and individuality of the people with whom social workers are engaged, as well as the crucial interaction between the individual and their social contexts. Butt and Parton (2005) argue that the need to recognise the views and experiences of those with whom practitioners are working is central if its attempts to contribute towards emancipation are to be realised.

Generally, however, there is a recognition that the roles of researcher and practitioner have much in common, and more particularly that both are trying to make sense of the world and are crucially concerned with generating and reflecting on knowledge and how it might be used. This is very important in dealing with human rights

violations, and by using reflexivity on an on-going basis I hoped to avoid the danger of re-traumatising participants who had already being traumatised by their daily experiences in apartheid South Africa.

More specifically, Rodwell (1998) has identified a number of areas where social constructionist approaches to research and practice can have many similarities. There is a general recognition of: the importance of context found in the nature of reality; the interactive nature of knowing and understanding; the importance of egalitarianism and empowerment; the dialogic nature of knowing; the viability and significance of tacit knowledge; the contextual nature of functional/pragmatic response; the multiple perspectives for making sense of the world and meaning making in the world; and the tentative and changing nature of knowledge and goals (see Rodwell, 1998: ch. 1) .

Whether at the level of practice or larger systems, social workers contend with a huge array of challenges that have direct bearing on client wellbeing, power and opportunity. "Client issues stem not only from within individuals, families and communities, but from a 'hodgepodge' of often conflicting and contradictory policies, ideologies and stratification systems that distribute power and privilege, along the lines of gender, race, social class, marital status, sexual orientation, culture, ability and age, among other categories of social location" (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002: 43).

### **3.1.4 Alternatives to the grounded theory method**

Various qualitative methodologies could have been adopted for this research (Creswell, 2012). Participatory action research, for example, might have been appropriate as it is inherently empowering. Reason & Bradbury (2001: 29) describe this approach to research as:

'a participatory democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes ... it seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities'.



Therefore participatory research seeks to 'de-elitise' and de-mystify research, thereby making it an intellectual tool that ordinary people can use to improve their lives.

However, although this is very relevant and appropriate in the South African situation, the challenge of conducting the research in SA, with limited time 'in the field', financial constraints and barriers to establishing a meaningful research group, prevented use of this methodology.

On the other hand, a phenomenological approach might also have been appropriate, as it emphasises lived experiences. However, phenomenology, which means the study of consciousness, pursues a quest for essences and, like constructivism, focuses on cognitive processes and the study of emotions. This contrasts with the use of GTM to develop social constructionist analyses: that is, claims to knowledge and meanings that are historically and culturally constructed through social processes and action (Langdrige, 2007, 2008; Young & Collin, 2003).

Although it appears that this approach might have been quite suitable for my study, as it shares many characteristics with the GTM method (e.g. exploration of experiences and meanings, and making sense of them), I decided not to use it because it is an approach that tends to recruit small samples, is context-dependent and tends to focus on identity processes rather than broader social processes. Given the wide array of experiences both of human resource violations and testimony giving, I wanted to take a larger sample of people's experiences and analyse the underlying social processes with minimal theoretical influence.

### **3.1.5 Grounded theory method**

#### ***Background history***

Eaves (2001) posits that recent years have seen an unprecedented growth in the use of qualitative research methods, but in particular there has been a rise in the number of published research studies that use grounded theory. He therefore defines GTM as a qualitative research method that was developed for the purpose of studying social phenomena from the perspective of symbolic interactionism. ). As a method, style and paradigmatic approach to research analysis, GTM was born out of an intriguing collaboration between Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the

proverbial 'fathers' of GTM. However, since the co-creation of their approach to theory development through research in 1967, these scholars have taken seemingly divergent paths in developing and evolving the pragmatic use of GTM (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004: 605).

As a result of this divergence, Stern (1994) has characterised the differing versions as 'Glaserian' and 'Straussian' respectively, but further suggests that inadequate monitoring of novice GTM researchers concerning the origin of, and precise differences between, the methods has perpetuated a lack of differential clarity on their distinctive qualities. However variant are their underlying philosophies on how GT should be applied in the process of doing research, Glaser (1978) and Strauss (1987) (see also Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) agree on this purpose:

"the discovery of enduring theory that is faithful to the reality of the research area; makes sense to the phenomena studied; fits the template of the social situation, regardless of the varying contexts related to the studied phenomenon; adequately provides for relationships amongst concepts; and may be used to guide action" (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004: 606)

Denzin & Lincoln (2005: 11) argue that Strauss and Corbin 'attempted to modify the usual canons of good (positivist) science to fit their own post-positivistic conception of rigorous research'. Their uses of systematic methods of data collection and analysis have been described as consistent with positivism (Charmaz, 2008a). Yet Charmaz has been associated with taking grounded theory into a more social constructionist position, accepting that both participants and researchers bring their own understandings, attributions and interactions to answering 'why' questions relating to social life (Charmaz, 2008b). Her perspective is highly relevant to the current study.

Willig (2008) states that, being unhappy with the way in which existing theories dominated sociological research, Glaser and Strauss argued that researchers needed a method that would allow them to move from data to theory, so that new theories could emerge. Such theories would be specific to the context in which they had been developed. In other words, they would be 'grounded' in the data from which they had emerged rather than relying on analytical constructs, categories or variables from pre-

existing theories. Grounded theory method was therefore designed to open up a space for the development of new contextualised theories (Willig, 2008: 34).

According to Bryant and Charmaz (2007), GTM comprises a systematic inductive and comparative approach for conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008). They argue that this method is designed to encourage researchers' persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analysis. Data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Boyчук Duscher & Morgan (2004: 32) posit that the degree of groundedness lies in the primary founders' differing epistemological emphases, with Glaser admitting to being 'trained to combat 'impressionistic' influences by tying the theory tightly to the data over and over again' In contrast, Strauss in more recent collaborative work with Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 13) claimed that, whilst the researcher 'allows the theory to emerge from data ... analysis is the interplay between researchers and data ... [such that] procedures provide some standardisation and rigor to the process'.

On the other hand, Charmaz's (2000) current constructivist slant on GTM 'recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed and aims towards the interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings' (Boyчук Duchscher & Morgan, 2004: 606). Glaser's (1991) 'emergence vs. forcing' debate centres on his adherence to an emergence model of theory generation in which theory rises directly and rigorously out of data; it is returned to the data for verification but is devoid of interpretivism. However, he criticises Strauss on the grounds that his divergence towards prolonged fracturing of data through directive questioning, which forces a preconceived conceptual description, is significant and valid in its own right, but is not emergent grounded theory.

The understanding of GTM is partly dependent on an awareness of the method's ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives, and an analysis of these factors suggests that GTM has traditionally been situated in a post-positivist inquiry paradigm but is evolving and moving towards the constructivist inquiry paradigm (Annells, 1996). Hence, in contemplating the use of the method for my research, I believed that the research question or sensitising question was one that GTM could investigate. In addition, qualitative research method, Ubuntu and social constructionism

all appear to be congruent with one another, and hence are appropriate for analysing the experiences of victims/survivors of human rights violations.

GTM can also be linked with the theory of symbolic interactionism. With its aim of developing explanatory theory concerning common social life patterns, GTM has emerged from the symbolic interaction tradition of social psychology and sociology (Cheniz & Swanson, 1986). Annells (1996) continues to argue that, as symbolic interactionism is both a theory about human behaviour and an approach to enquiring into human conduct and group behaviour, it tackles the question of the individual in society and the relationship between individual perceptions, collective action and society – aspects that fit in very well with how to deal with human rights abuses in the South African context.

Charmaz (2006) maintains that GTM has evolved or changed since it was originated by Glaser and Strauss, depending on the researcher's perspective. Viewing GTM as a set of principles and practices, and not as prescriptions, Charmaz emphasises flexible guidelines, not methodological rules, recipes and requirements. According to Charmaz, GTM can complement other approaches to qualitative data analysis, rather than stand in opposition to them. She argues that she occasionally draws on excellent examples from qualitative studies whose authors do not claim grounded theory allegiance or whose writing only acknowledges specific aspects of the approach (2006: 9). Hopefully, this is what will become clear in my study.

Charmaz (2006) states that, in contrast to the position of Glaser and Strauss, which talks about discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer, her position assumes that neither data nor theories are discovered; rather, researchers are part of the world they study and the data they collect. She says that researchers construct their grounded theories through past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices (2006: 10). Unlike Glaser and Strauss, whose works encompassed both phenomenology and positivistic emphases, whose method took on a life of its own, independent of the researcher, and who implied that core problems and processes would reveal themselves rather than be defined by actors and analysts, Charmaz's constructionist perspective represents one version of GTM (Charmaz, 1990). Using Charmaz's GTM principles from social

constructionist and social justice perspectives would be relevant in researching the psycho-social conditions of the victims/survivors of human rights violations in SA.

In summary, although GTM is a contested concept, Bryant and Charmaz argue that its contested nature does not detract from its value and contribution. Charmaz (2006; cited in Bryant and Charmaz, 2011) states that grounded theory is a method contested from both within and without, and that the contested status of the method further complicates what stands as a grounded theory study today. Since its inception in 1967, GTM has undergone both clarification and changes by all its major proponents and has become an evolving general qualitative method with three versions: constructivist, objectivist and post-positivist. Major texts that teach readers how to use GTM represent each version of GTM (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

### ***3.1.6 Grounded theory and social justice***

Charmaz (2011) has argued that qualitative researchers can use grounded theory to advance social justice inquiry. There is no argument that this approach is highly appropriate for the South African situation, where apartheid has for decades practised an immoral system of inequality and discrimination based on the colour of people's skin. She continues by saying that GTM offers social justice researchers tools not only for developing innovative analysis, but also for examining established concepts afresh. To mine the largely untapped potential of grounded theory methods for social justice inquiry, social justice researchers need to understand the logic of the method, the development of its different versions, their epistemological roots and how they might use them.

According to Charmaz (2011), research in the area of social justice addresses differential power, prestige, resources and suffering among people and individuals. It focuses and furthers equitable resources, fairness and eradication of oppression. This is one of the most appropriate methodologies to use even in post-apartheid SA, with its legacy of extreme social, economic and political divides affecting the most marginalised, powerless and voiceless people of that country.

Charmaz (2011: 362) also posits that 'researchers who pursue social justice goals enrich the contributions of development of GTM'. Their attentiveness to context,

constraint, power and inequality advances attending to structural, temporal and situational context in qualitative research generally and in grounded theory studies specifically. Social justice researchers are attuned to the silent workings of structure and power. They can offer grounded theorists important reminders of how historical conditions and larger conditions shape current situations. This is poignant in SA, where the TRC has been criticised in its quest to promote reconciliation by focusing mainly on all those victims who were tortured, victimised or perished from the 1960 Sharpeville massacre onwards, and for not taking enough notice of the power structures and day-to-day abuse and maltreatment of the ordinary citizens of the country.

The purpose and promise of GTM, therefore, is to create a coherent theory by developing abstract concepts and specifying the relationship between them. Charmaz (2011) contends that her approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it (Charmaz, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). Research participants' implicit meanings and experiential views, and researchers' finished grounded theories, are accepted to be constructions of reality (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical concepts in GTM result from interactive processes of going back and forth between progressively more focused data and successively more abstract categorisation of them. 'Significant categories are then treated to further analysis and raising them to concepts in their emerging theories' (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007: 25). How the principles of GTM were used to analyse the data in this project will expounded fully later in this chapter.

### ***Limitations and criticisms of grounded theory method***

Willig (2008: 48) argues that, as is the case with all research methods, 'GTM does have a number of limitations and the most widely raised criticism of GTM concerns its epistemological roots.' It has been argued that grounded theory subscribes to a positivist epistemology and that it sidesteps questions of reflexivity. It is a theory that works with induction, whereby observations give rise to new ideas, and one problem associated with induction is that it pays insufficient attention to the role of the researcher. Thus GTM has been criticised for not addressing the issue of reflexivity satisfactorily. Henwood and Pidgeon (1994). have debated 'What grounds grounded theory?', pointing

out the tension between realism and constructivism, and the tendency among some to believe that 'truth' can be inferred. However, more sophisticated social constructionist versions of grounded theory (e.g. Charmaz, 1990, 2006) address these concerns and attempt to develop reflexive grounded theory, in which the role of the researcher as interpreter of findings is accepted. Willig (2008: 46) further argues that it is recognised that categories can never 'capture the essence' of a concept in its entirety, and that categories do not simply 'emerge' from the data because they do not exist before the process of categorisation; rather, they are constructed by the researcher during the research process. Reflexivity is explored further in the method part of this chapter.

### **3.1.7 Methodology: summary**

I have discussed how and why a qualitative research paradigm is suited to this type of study. Due to the nature of the phenomenon under study – namely, victims'/survivors' experiences of human rights violations in apartheid SA and the impact of testifying before the South African TRC – I have discussed how qualitative research approaches are suited to exploring survivors' lived experiences and how the approach could help to make sense of those experiences. In addition, I have demonstrated how grounded theory principles seemed appropriate for analysing survivors' experiences following the transformation of GTM from being dominated by the positivistic view to being situated in the social constructivist paradigm espoused by Charmaz (2006).

Using my Ubuntu influences, I have shown how some aspects of Ubuntu, social constructionism from Charmaz's perspective, and reflexivity have shaped the study. My professional skills as a social worker have also had considerable influence on the way I co-constructed realities with participants in this study. The congruency of the workings of all three approaches, epistemology (interpretive/social constructivist), ontological (social constructionism/Ubuntu) and methodology (qualitative), plus my social work skills in this study have been highlighted. It is also important that these three positions aim for coherence.

The following sections of this chapter will address in detail how GTM principles were applied to the collection and analysis of data regarding the impact of participants' experiences of testifying before the TRC.

## **3.2 Method**

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

The remainder of this chapter describes, step by step, how I carried out the study. As I was dealing with vulnerable people, most of whom had experienced serious trauma-related injuries, received as ‘human rights’ abuses perpetrated against them by the apartheid security state, ethical and risk issues needed to be given special consideration. I will also explain what sources I used to recruit participants as well as how I decided upon the sample size I chose.

Later, issues of ethical codes and consent, confidentiality and trust will be considered. These are the issues most frequently raised in Western research ethical guidelines and by professional associations (Ryen, 2004). The rest of the chapter will include explanations of instrumentation, procedures, interviews, rigour and preparations for data analysis, and a summary will conclude the chapter.

### **3.2.2 Design**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experience of giving testimony and the long-term legacy of presenting to the South African TRC for victims/survivors of gross human rights violations perpetrated under the apartheid system. The main reason for selecting a qualitative research method – because of my interest in making meaning of participants’ experiences – was discussed earlier in the chapter. As Willig (2008) contends that there are no right or wrong methods of analysis, for my data collection techniques I chose semi-structured interviews, as they appeared to be compatible with several methods of analysis including grounded theory, which was my analytical method of preference. Each participant took part in a single lengthy interview.

Good-quality research questions tend to be process-orientated and are participant-led or bottom-up, in that they allow participant-generated meanings to be heard (Willig, 2008). This approach fitted very well with my interviews of victims of



human rights violations, who were recruited from two areas of SA in order to explore commonalities and differences in experiences.

The aims and objectives of the study are discussed in Chapter 1 (Introduction) as well as in Chapter 2 (Literature review).

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

An interview guide was used to elicit information on participants' TRC experiences. A consultant panel was set up to assist with refining and pre-testing the interview guide. This panel consisted of survivors drawn from the Khulumani project and one staff member who had experience in the TRC field. A member of the Khulumani support group acted as a pilot (see below for further details about the role of Khulumani).

Interviews were based on an interview guide approach that comprised mainly open-ended questions, as this allowed space for differences to emerge amongst people (Reinharz, 1992) and was the most appropriate method of data generation, given the nature of the inquiry. Reinharz (1992) also indicates that interviewing allows participants to express their ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather in the words of the researcher. Denscombe (2010) debates the merits of structured versus unstructured interviewing, whilst Erlandson et al. (1993) suggest deciding in advance on key appropriate questions and their sequence to enable comparison of accounts. As interviewing progresses, grounded theory studies commonly extend the topic guide to follow up leads revealed by earlier participants (Charmaz, 2008a). The interviews were tape recorded and were verbatim transcribed in preparation for analysis, to ensure a full and accurate record of what was said (Darlington & Scott, 2002).

Qualitative research relies heavily on in-depth, semi-structured interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 2010), which can be seen as a purposeful conversation. Semi-structured interviews balance flexibility and spontaneity with planning and structure. Willig (2001) notes that semi-structured interviews are often chosen because they have been found to be compatible with several methods of data analysis (e.g. discourse analysis, grounded theory, interpretative phenomenology) and are somewhat easier to arrange than other qualitative collection methods. This is not to say that the actual process of semi-structured interviewing is 'easy'. Yet there are fewer logistical difficulties in arranging a series of semi-structured interviews with a small number of volunteers

than in designing a longitudinal study that may involve the negotiation of access to organisations and groups for the purposes of participant observation, focus groups or gaining participants' commitment to keeping diaries over a period of time. Darlington and Scott (2002: 49) posit that, like in-depth interviews, 'semi-structured interviews have particular strengths such as sharing the general advantage of face-face contact. Their immediacy and relational quality afford considerable flexibility to the data collection process, both in terms of the areas explored and the direction of the discussion.' For instance, I found that interviewing participants in their homes offered the kind of intimacy as well as informality that allowed participants to relax and enjoy being part of the discussion rather than being asked 'yes or no' questions. Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 114) refer to interviewing as 'an active meaning making process', claiming that 'respondents were not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information, awaiting excavation, so to speak – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers'. Kvale (2008) refers to interviewing as 'co-travelling' with the participant – an approach adopted in this study.

The interviews were single interviews and were conducted 12–17 years following participants' appearance before the TRC (on average, 14 years). In most cases, interviews lasted about 60–90 minutes per participant, with a small number lasting up to three hours. Only on one occasion did I have to re-interview a participant because the tape failed to record the last part of the interview due to a flat battery. The interview agenda is presented in Figure 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1 Interview agenda**

1.	Circumstances before the TRC
2.	Life before the TRC
3.	Life during the TRC
4.	Life after submitting evidence
5.	The concept of forgiveness and its meaning for participants
6.	Their views about perpetrators
7.	Psychological healing and its meaning

- |                   |
|-------------------|
| 8. Amnesty        |
| 9. Reconciliation |
| 10. Reparation    |

I decided that the topic guide should comprise mainly topic headings instead of questions and to move on to more personal questions when rapport was established. I then formulated questions during the course of the interview, which allowed me to incorporate the interviewee's own terms and concepts into the questions, thus making the questions more appropriate and relevant to the interviewee (Willig, 2001). This approach also encouraged answers that provided detailed descriptions.

Attention was given to running the interviews as skilfully as possible. It is important not to begin the interview 'cold' (Kvale, 2008)). The process included developing trust where participants felt respected and accepted, and where a permissive and creative atmosphere was established. I needed to consider my role, dress and the appropriate level of formality (Erlandson, 1993). It was also necessary to ensure the physical and emotional comfort of the participants. The interview started with me reiterating my motives and intentions as well as the inquiry's purpose (Erlandson, 1993; Kvale, 2008). Protection of participants was included by explaining why they needed to choose pseudonyms (Taylor & Bogden, 1998). Berg (1998) suggested presenting a natural front, demonstrating aware hearing and being respectful, cordial and appreciative. Appropriate closure to the interview was necessary, acknowledging contributions, checking on wellbeing, and establishing the type of member checking (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that participants would most value.

Although initially participants were going to be interviewed at the Khulumani organisation's headquarters (see the description of recruitment below), some participants were unable to travel such a long distance to the offices due to limitations in mobility. Consequently, five participants, who were mainly from Soweto, were interviewed at home. Initially, I had misgivings about this because great care was taken and preparations made in the offices to ensure that interviews would be conducted in a safe and secure environment. However, on reflection it turned out that the interviews conducted at home were more open, flexible and conducive to better articulation of

their stories, in their time and in a relaxed manner, despite variables such as occasional interruptions by family members, friends and relatives who happened to pass by, the slamming of a door and even the barking of a dog outside the house. Through constant reflexivity on my part, and their own familiarity with the context, the participants did not appear to be bothered by the disruptions.

Prior to going out to collect data, I calculated that interviews would probably last between 1 hour and 1½ hours, but several lasted between 2 and 2½ hours or even longer.

Interviews were tape recorded in either Sotho (Tswana) or Zulu (Xhosa) but were all translated and transcribed into English by the author. All the transcribing was done by hand.

### **3.2.3 Ethics**

Ethical and moral dilemmas abound in the social research enterprise, so much so that they sometimes seem to be taken for granted (Hertz, 1996). Hertz argues that personal involvement with people whom we study leads each one of us to grapple with our obligations and responsibilities to people with whom we have formed intimate ties. Issues that usually cause concern are harm, privacy, consent, deception and confidentiality; some of these issues will be discussed in the chapter.

Bulmer (2001: 45) explains ethics as follows:

“Ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human dignity leaves one ignorant of human nature”.

Therefore the protection of human participants is imperative (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001).

### ***Gaining permission from SHSSC, Brunel University***

The project was granted ethical approval in April 2010 by the School of Health Sciences and Social Care Ethics Committee, Brunel University. A number of delays were experienced in gaining ethical permission due to difficulties securing the agreement and support of the NGO called 'Khulumani' in South Africa, and authorisation by its director. Negotiating this access required three visits to the country on three consecutive years in preparation for fieldwork. I was only able to visit South Africa for data collection finally in May 2010 following Khulumani's approval letter dated 11 February 2010 (see appendix 1), and after Brunel University's approval, which was granted on 28 April 2010 .

In Khulumani's case, the organisation was run by a board of trustees and all applications to conduct research were to be discussed in their meetings and given a seal of approval by its director, who generally had been mandated to serve as a gatekeeper. Hagan (2006; cited in Berg, 2007: 185) argues that gatekeepers are people or groups who are in position to grant or deny access to a research setting. He argues further that gaining access may require some sort of mediation with gatekeepers, and research bargains may necessarily be struck. In the case of my study I had to agree and give an undertaking regarding the following:

That participants' transcripts will be stored with Khulumani database which will facilitate and help towards successful conclusion of the organisation's litigation (Tort) with US & UK's multinational trading with the apartheid.

### ***Practical difficulties in gaining permission and a research partner***

Following approval from my university's ethics committee at Brunel University (see Appendix 2), I was faced with a further challenge of receiving official approval from the organisation from which I recruited participants. This was required by the ethics committee prior to my plans to depart to SA to collect data. On the other hand, the director of Khulumani was also reluctant to provide informal approval for me to interview the organisation's members until I received formal ethic approval from the university. I was sent Khulumani's research procedures to present to my university (see Appendix 3).

This tension was resolved when I decided to take a special trip to SA to offer reassurances and explanations in person that I needed instrumental support prior to formal approval by the university ethics committee. Only after this gesture was I able to prepare to go and collect data. However, this did not stop me from wondering whether this (as I considered it) overzealous protection of the organisation's members was a form of discrimination. However, I got to know later about how protective Khulumani support group was towards its members. Apart from the victims'/survivors' grievances against the TRC and the new government that created it and beyond the immediate questions of reparations, Colvin (2004) reported that victims/survivors had been unhappy with the way the 'storytelling' about apartheid past, one of the principal components of the TRC hearings that was supposed to 'empower' victims – had failed to provide an effective basis for 'victim centred' politics after apartheid. All the subsequent failings of the TRC as well as the government, to deliver promises led to strained relationships between Khulumani and not only the government but other organisations such as other NGOs and particularly the media. All along, Khulumani had been trying to develop an emotional and performative approach to storytelling whilst also gaining control over the production and circulation of these stories (Colvin 2004). The author contends that 'the critique applied not only to the TRC, GNU (Government of National Unity) and journalists but to the many social science researchers who descended on SA to document and interpret its transition' (p. 10). So, this explains the treatment I received from the director of Khulumani when I requested to involve its members in my study. I was perceived likewise as somebody who was just keen to pursue self-interested objectives and not necessarily concerned with how I was going to represent the victims'/survivors' stories. This treatment of researchers by Khulumani was also confirmed by Clark (2012) who conducted more or less a similar study involving Khulumani members in Kwa-Zulu Natal. I had to work very hard to convince the organisation that my interest in the study was genuine and honest, and that as a SA black female, social worker, researcher and an insider/outsider, my motives for undertaking this study had the welfare of the participants at heart. This involved three specially organised visits/trips to the organisation in SA prior to collecting data for this study in 2010 .

### ***Ethical issues when researching sensitive topics***

Lee and Renzetti (1990) posit that one difficulty with the notion of a 'sensitive' topic is that the term is often used in the literature as if it were self-explanatory. In other words, the term usually is treated in a commonsense way, with no attempt at definition (1993: 3). The authors pose a question about why and what it is about some research topics that makes them more sensitive than other topics. In answer to this question, Sieber and Stanley (1988) suggested that 'socially' sensitive research carries social implications for both the researcher and/or the researched and may involve a substantial threat. This risk applies to the collection, holding and/or dissemination of research data. Lee and Renzetti, (1990) suggest that sensitivity, as the term has been used, affects almost every stage of the research process, from formulation through design, to implementation, dissemination and application.

Doing research in SA meant that ethics was always going to be a challenge, for either the researched or the researcher, or both. Atrocities, levelled mainly at the black population of the country, had taken place on a large scale for three decades, resulting in traumatic experiences for all those defined as victims of gross human rights violations by the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995).

Hadjistavropoulos and Smythe (2010: 166) comment that human research ethics committees play an important gatekeeping role in all research involving human subjects and are likely to be extra vigilant in their consideration of proposals for research concerning any potentially vulnerable groups. In addition, being an 'insider/outsider' always throws up several challenges for a researcher. For instance, my insider status was undoubtedly significant because there were biases and assumptions that stemmed from it. My previous knowledge and experience as a citizen of SA, and having worked professionally in the country, gave me insights that outsiders might not appreciate (Finlay, 1998). However, I had to guard against assuming that because we shared the same language, culture and experiences, there were no differences. This came as a real shock to me during the first batch of interviews in Gauteng, when I realised that in fact I had no idea about the struggles that victims of human rights violations experienced during the heights of the violence in SA.

Hadjistavropoulos and Smythe (2010) argue that issues may be compounded when autobiographical issues are highlighted which may lead to disclosure of sensitive

psychological themes and information about third parties that can be problematic. I saw this happening a lot in my study as the focus was on the psychosocial impact of presenting to the TRC. This led not only to personal disclosure, but also to names of other people and their experiences being mentioned in the process of the narrative. Whilst it is not so much an issue for participants to 'name names', as a researcher I needed to be careful not to include 'names' and to be sensitive that other people's experiences might be discussed, who had not given permission for this to happen.

Ethical principles:

Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2000) argue that ethical issues are present in any kind of research. The research process creates tension between the aims of research to make generalisations for the good of others and the rights of participants to maintain privacy. Ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm, and that harm can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles.

Orb et al. also say that the nature of ethical problems in qualitative research is subtle and different from problems in quantitative research. For instance, potential ethical conflicts exist in regard to how a researcher gains access to a community group and the effects the researcher may have on participants.

They name various principles of ethical qualitative research. These include *autonomy*, which in qualitative research is honoured by informed consent, which means striking a reasonable balance between being over-informed and under-informed (Kvale, 1998). It also means that participants exercise their rights as autonomous persons to voluntarily accept or refuse to participate in the study. A second principle is *beneficence* – doing good for others and preventing harm – and a third, *justice*, which refers to equal shares and fairness. One of the distinctive features of this principle is avoiding exploitation and abuse of participants, which is demonstrated by recognising the vulnerability of the participants and their contributions to the study.

The two ethical principles from the American Psychological Association's code of ethics (APA, 2012); that are most applicable to elements of risk are 'respect for people's rights and dignity' and 'concern for others' welfare', which includes protecting interview and other data. The APA also argues that the principle of 'concern for others' welfare' should encourage a focus on participants' well-being. Psychologists and other



researchers seek to contribute to the welfare of those with whom they interact professionally (Hadjistavropoulos & Smythe, 2010: 1600). The principle of integrity is also important because it implies an obligation to disclose all risks to potential research participants. Professional and scientific responsibility stresses the importance of adapting methods to the needs of different populations. Competence and social responsibility also apply.

All these responsibilities and principles are very much in line with my social work values – values that include respect for individuals, acceptance of themselves, upholding the right to self-determination, adoption of a non-judgemental attitude, sympathy and empathy, to name just a few. Therefore, apart from being ethically prepared for the field, my social work skills stood me in good stead.

Trauma and the potential for re-traumatisation:

Berg (2007: 71) argues that amongst the serious ethical concerns that have received attention during the past decades is the assurance that subjects are voluntarily involved and informed of all the risks.

When I decided to embark on this study, I knew from the very beginning that the potential to re-traumatize participants was high. Having worked in a mental health setting for over 20 years, I was fully aware that whilst I had the training and skills to be reasonably able to prevent harm, I needed to consider seriously if I really wished to expose participants to such experiences. As a result, in my reflections and discussions with others off whom I bounced my ideas, I came to the conclusion that I could not guarantee that participants would not experience re-traumatisation when old wounds were opened. Hence, in order to minimise harm, I would recruit participants who were believed to have experienced (at worst) minor psychological effects and exclude all those who had experienced serious mental health difficulties. This was established by the gatekeeping organisation.

Hadjistavropoulos and Smythe (2010) argue that qualitative research has considerable potential to induce negative psychological states, and as I have already indicated, the possibility of this happening in my study was high, without careful management. One way of dealing with this problem was to be completely honest with participants from the beginning, warning them that there was a risk that they might be

harmed by remembering past painful experiences, but that they were perfectly within their rights to discontinue interviews or withdraw from the study if they felt the need to. They were also assured that they would not be compromised or victimised as a result.

In addition to my own skills, I was assured by the Khulumani support group that some of its staff members had been trained as counsellors and would be available to provide support if and when required. I also engaged in debriefing sessions after every interview with participants to ensure that they were not left with feelings of discomfort following emotionally heavy periods of disclosure. I made sure I had a list of locally available resources such as trauma centres/clinics, A&E clinics and hospitals near the designated interviewing places (see Appendix 4).

Other small comforts were provided, such as a supply of tea, coffee and biscuits, and tissues for those who tended to shed tears or were coughing a lot due to their medical problems (e.g. heart conditions). I also paused the interviews where participants were distressed or tired after an emotional session. Using my own social work skills, I treated participants with respect and was mindful of avoiding harm.

Informed consent:

Lee (1993) argues that informed consent means far more than the participants signing a consent statement – it means communicating respectfully and openly with participants and community members throughout the project, respecting their autonomy and lifestyle, and providing useful debriefing about the nature, findings and value of the research and its likely dissemination. These values were espoused by the South African TRC when dealing with victims/survivors of human rights violations. Lee and colleagues warn that deception and concealment, while perhaps acceptable in some laboratory research, are generally unacceptable and not at all feasible in sensitive qualitative research.

According to the *Brunel University Ethics Handbook* (2005), consent issues take centre stage in qualitative research. Rule 1 of the Nuremburg Code (revised 1981) emphasises the fundamental importance of consent thus:

The person involved should be so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit,

duress, over-reaching or other ulterior form of constraint or coercion; and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the subject-matter involved as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision.

This brings the notion of informed consent into focus.

After potential participants had been identified, had read the written information and had informally agreed to participate in the study, then formal consent was sought. The consent form was written in the language the participants understood – either the Zulu or Sotho language – as these are the two official and mostly widely spoken languages amongst black South Africans (see Appendix 5).

People whose comprehension of English is limited, should have the consent forms and the agreement that they can withdraw from the research at any time written in their own languages, although I was aware that it may be difficult to ensure genuine informed consent in such circumstances (Tindana et al, 2006). The consent form was signed by participants and the researcher, and witnessed by a Khulumani staff member. The written information provided and the consent form reflected the information that Lincoln & Guba (1985) explicitly identify as necessary: name, address, telephone number of the researcher, and statement of purpose of inquiry (giving sufficient detail to convey participant's role and how information would be used). Issues that were included when drawing up the consent form included: maintaining confidentiality and anonymity; measures to prevent both raw and processed data being linked to specific people; measures to limit access to data; participants' right to withdraw from study at any time; notification that participation is entirely voluntary; and clarifying who had final say over the study's content (Berg, 1998, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Time was given for participants to sign, having read the document and agreed to previous stipulations as a condition for signing. (The form is found in Appendix 5.)

A very few of the participants in my study did not know how to write a signature, but agreed to put an X on the form as a representation of their signature.

### Confidentiality:

Berg (2007: 79) argues that the terms 'confidentiality' and 'anonymity' are often used interchangeably, but goes on to describe 'confidentiality' as an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the participants' identities. In contrast, 'anonymity' means that the subjects remain nameless. Even though subjects are known to the researcher, it is important to provide them with a high degree of confidentiality, as names of places, stores or streets in association with a description of certain characteristics about an individual may make it possible to discover a subject's identity.

According to Ryen (2010; 419) 'confidentiality means that we as qualitative researchers are obliged to protect participants' identities, the place and the location of the research'. The Brunel University Ethic Research Handbook, 2005: 19 also provided that advice. However, I confronted a dilemma about what to do when a participant did not wish to remain anonymous, as the reflexive journal example below will show.

In this study, confidentiality was assured by removing all names and other personally identifying details from the participants' accounts. Pseudonyms were used. Data were kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act, in secure storage as well as password protected. The list of participants' authentic names and consent forms were kept securely in a different office, away from their interview data.

A further ethical dilemma concerned how to protect the confidentiality of people who had not given their informed consent to be included in the research, when participants' stories were closely bound up with theirs. For instance, some participants would refer to husbands, daughters or sons having been injured or having disappeared under suspicious circumstances during the state of emergency in apartheid SA. I discussed such dilemmas with participants, so that mutually agreed and morally satisfactory decisions might be reached. To do so requires on-going reflexivity and moral sensitivity (Weaver & Morse, 2006). This advice was followed.

An example of my reflective journal and memo reflects the dilemma:

03/06/10: Last day of the 16 interviews in the Gauteng areas (Soweto & East Rand). 10 out of 16 participants wanted their names mentioned in the transcript, the main reason being that they wanted the world to know who they

were and their stories made public. I had to explain that it was the university's ethical principles to have them anonymised in case they were identified for legal reasons. I also had to explain our responsibilities as a researcher of ensuring that they are protected from external harm. I got the sense even though I had convinced them about my role that they felt cheated and that as individuals their stories may not be reflected as unique as they would have wanted. I reminded them that as a collective their stories had more power and were not diminished. Maybe they felt faceless without their names reflected, I don't know – it's difficult to tell.

Managing distress during the interview:

As a qualified social worker and researcher, I was able to identify the initial signs of distress and offer participants a break in case they needed to calm down. In case this did not help, I had planned that I would then enlist the help of Khulumani staff and together we would make a decision as to whether the particular participants needed further or specialist professional support, in which case the list of resources would be used to identify the relevant resource. Fortunately, none of the participants, in either Gauteng or the Western Cape, required referral to these resources. Khulumani staff with counselling skills and who knew participants very well were always present in the vicinity to ensure that should any of the members have experienced distress they would be available to provide advice or/and support.

To give one example of managing distress, from my research journal:

Mrs K was relating the story of how during the removals of their communities from squatter camps by the SAP resulted in her losing her baby. She was pregnant at the time and whilst being chased by the police and being shamboked at the same time she fell and later on had a spontaneous abortion. She started crying at this point and without warning she became hysterical. Her voice was raised and for a fraction of a second I had no idea of what to do. I paused the tape recorder and moved over to her to calm her down. Fortunately the staff member was also at hand immediately to assist. I held her hand for about 10–15 minutes until she regained her composure.

Sometimes I found that in a professional role it was acceptable to be tactile. People who are grieving often respond well to being touched and comforted. Glaser & Strauss (1974: 159) found that nurses on wards of dying patients often provided a 'shoulder to cry on' for relatives who had just been made aware of a relative's death.

In case of specific potential vulnerabilities, such as negative mood and depression, I had the help from Khulumani staff to screen potential participants during the recruitment process. The purpose of the screening was not to discriminate against potential participants but to prevent harm by taking special precautions (e.g. by ensuring that the interviewer has the professional competencies necessary to work with people who have such vulnerabilities), which I believe I have (Hadjistavropoulos & Smythe, 2010: 173).

From the beginning, when I started communications with the Khulumani support group it was made quite clear to them that individuals with serious mental health difficulties would not be included in the study to prevent serious re-traumatisation as well as putting individuals at risk of mental relapses. The information leaflet also reflected this clearly, and during the fact-finding meeting the issue was discussed and clarified to both the staff and the members of Khulumani.

According to Hamber (2009: 58), the TRC trained and provided briefers/debriefers for those testifying before it. This became the major direct psychological intervention that the TRC undertook, although with limited referrals to NGOs offering counselling services. The intention of debriefing/debriefing sessions was to ensure that witnesses had sufficient information about the legal implications of their public testimony, such as the naming of perpetrators, and that they were psychologically ready to testify (Hamber, 2006: 58). A similar principle applied to this study. Debriefing sessions were also utilised to screen participants for potential negative psychological consequences and steps taken to minimise these. Debriefings were also used regularly after the end of every interview to ensure that participants were not left with lingering emotional feelings after they had shared their stories.

In summary, Hadjistavropoulos and Smythe (2010: 173) contend that debriefing, like consent, needs to be a process that is revisited throughout the course of the

research because issues relating to participants' vulnerabilities can be prevented or minimised through such a process . My research followed this practice.

Managing disclosure of illegal information or other issues that might require referral to support agencies:

A further ethical dilemma relates to managing information revealing possibly illegal activity. My focus was on the experience of giving testimony and its meanings, rather than identifying any relatively minor infringement of the law. The way I dealt with my dilemma with one of my participants is reflected in the following example:

20/06/10: Ms T had lost her business during the political riots in the East Rand. She was promised reimbursement by the local council but up till now she has not been offered anything. She confessed that the councillor's son divulged that his father, the councillor, has pocketed the money. Naturally she is very unhappy and would like the councillor to be exposed. At the same time she is very disgruntled with the health services accusing the service of failing to provide the necessary treatment for victims/survivors who need them. She has now decided to use alternative stuff which is marijuana which is illegal in South Africa. She claimed she was not using it secretly because she wanted the government to know that she is partaking of an illegal substance. She said she wanted this information to be recorded in the transcript so that everybody, especially the government, is made aware of her actions. She claimed the 'herbs' as she preferred to call them were more effective than medical/drug treatment. I did not make a lot of fuss about this as I was clear that I was not going to disclose her identity. Most importantly I did not observe any signs of these 'herbs' having any negative effects on her. It was not a matter of life or death.

Addressing participants' motives for taking part – in particular, their hope for reparations:

Victims of human rights violations who wished to testify to the TRC had various motives. Some wished to know the truth; others more or less knew the truth and wished to know what was going to happen to perpetrators; and still others wished to know: what next? Certainly in the case of Khulumani, for most members it was quite clear from

the beginning that their main aim was to seek compensation in monetary terms. The organisation was in an on-going litigation battle with multinational companies that had traded with the apartheid regime. I was made aware of the participants' motivations for taking part in the TRC's processes. Apart from monetary expectations, even among those who proclaimed to have forgiven the perpetrators, most members focused on the improvement of their socio-economic conditions.

During my fact-finding mission with Khulumani, the first question I was asked by members was whether I was going to be involved in or facilitate the process of reparations. One participant begged me, firstly in a note she wrote to me prior to the interview, and then in the interview itself: 'I beg you to find me and my family a house.' From the very beginning, I had been open and honest about the fact that the study was going to cover experiences and meanings that participants attached to appearing before the TRC, sharing their stories and views about healing, confessions, truth, amnesty and rehabilitation/reparations, but that the study would not just concentrate on reparations. If anything, all the study might do would be to make recommendations, without guarantees of these being taken up by government. I believe that by the end of the study participants had reconciled themselves with the fact that the study was going to elucidate truths about their experiences and every one of them had come to accept that their stories would be known worldwide through articles, journals, or other public presentations.

Managing potential harm to the researcher – safeguards in place:

The Brunel University Research Handbook (2005) did not mention any risks to researchers, but at the time I applied for ethics authorisation, concerns were raised by the committee about my safety whilst conducting research in South Africa.

I had been in touch with Khulumani since I had known that I would be conducting research with their members and had ensured that safeguards were put in place prior to my arrival. Initially the agreement between Khulumani and me was that all interviews would be conducted at their headquarters in Johannesburg. The building is called 'Khotso' house and is centrally situated in the middle of Johannesburg. The building is occupied by different types of company and had an up-to-date health and safety policy, which was made accessible to all who used the building. There were smoke alarms and I



was shown all the fire exits and alarms. In addition, the companies had employed security guards to protect the building.

I was allocated one of Khulumani's offices, which was very convenient for conducting interviews with participants. It was roomy, with adequate light, and situated away from noise and distractions. It was the boardroom and was not going to be used during the duration of my occupation there.

However, after the first wave of interviews in the building, I was made aware of the fact that some participants might not be able to attend at the allocated and prepared venue. Consequently, I needed to visit them in their homes, mainly in Soweto and the East Rand. Several escorts who knew the participants and their homes were charged with the task of accompanying me to these homes, but I also ensured that I had one of my relatives to drive me around these areas as an extra safeguard.

Burgess (1991b: 43; cited in Berg, 2007: 175) suggests that access is 'negotiated and renegotiated throughout the research process'. He further states that 'access is based on sets of relationships between the researcher and the researched, established throughout the project', although Vallance (2001) has slightly different take on this matter, believing that access has to be sought through introduction and referrals. This might well be assuming that the investigator is undertaking research in an area (or topic) in which he knows many people actively engaged in related work or activities. However, this was tricky for me as initially I thought I was familiar with the townships of Soweto, only to discover that things had changed so much in the 20 years since I had been away that I could no longer recognise any of the places I had been to when I was younger. Therefore having an escort was especially important to ensure my safety.

### **3.2.4 Reflexivity: managing my double role as an insider/outsider, assumptions about the legacy of apartheid, and understanding and application of Ubuntu**

Berg (2007: 178) contends that access and ethical concerns underscore the fact that qualitative research requires a reflective concern on the part of the researcher – what is referred to as *reflexivity* by some scholars (Finlay, 1998; Finlay and Gough, 2008).

He says that this reflexive characteristic requires that the researcher understands that he or she is part of the social world(s) that she or he investigates.

A reflexive approach was taken throughout my study and supported by a reflective diary, to increase self-awareness of assumptions, insights, self-representation, emotional responses that might influence the conduct of the interview and later analysis, and power relationships, following Finlay's (2002) typology of reflexivity. I particularly felt that I needed to be reflecting more because I was so very close to participants and needed to avoid any element of bias in my findings.

I knew from the start of the study that it was not going to be possible for me to situate myself 'outside of' the subject matter (Willig, 2001: 10). This was compounded by the fact that, apart from sharing a history, linguistically, socially and economically, the participants and I had the same cultural values, which are clearly espoused in the philosophy called 'Ubuntu'.

Ubuntu worldview, reflexivity and social constructionism share the same views about realities. Social constructionism is concerned with identifying the various ways of constructing social reality that are available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use and trace their implications for human experience and social practice (Willig, 2001: 10). Reflexivity, on the hand, requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution of the meanings inferred throughout the research process, confirmed by the inter-connectness assumed within Ubuntu (as previously discussed) This view has been endorsed by Anjie Krog (2009: 353) in relation to the work of the TRC, when she commented that 'this view of interconnectedness, consistently expressed throughout the life of the commission, has wide implications for the interpretation of healing, the asking of amnesty, the rehabilitation of perpetrators, the interdependence of forgiveness and reconciliation in the process of achieving full personhood within a healed society'.

Throughout the interviewing, data collection and analysis, participants' responses and views about the TRC processes were juxtaposed alongside their Ubuntu worldview. The reflexive journal example below shows my situatedness in this study:

03/06/10: At the end of the wave of interviews in the Gauteng areas (16 in all) and preparing for my next trip to Western Cape, I was just wondering about my

feelings and views re: the participants' expressed strong anger and frustration at the government's (especially Thabo Mbeki) insensitivity to the plight (socio-economic situations) of the victims, who have testified and were promised extensive reparations (especially the monetary part of that). I put myself in their boots and found it difficult to accept this 'reneging act' on the part of the government. I made my views about this very obvious, i.e. that I understood and related to their anger/frustrations and that I would feel the same if that happened to me. In retrospect I thought maybe it was worthwhile investigating further in order to discover the reasons behind the 'U-Turn' as there appeared to be a lot of confusion as to what and how much victims/survivors were promised. Different individuals got different amounts and it was not clear what criteria were used to distribute these funds. It was all so very confusing.

It is recognised that presenting a reflexive research account which fully reveals researcher motives and moods as well as respecting and incorporating the voices of the participants is not an easy task (Finlay & Gough, 2008, b: 541–542) and that, even with consideration given to it, reflexivity probably cannot be fully obtained. Nonetheless, Charmaz's insights on grounded theory and advancing social justice studies offer promising leads (Charmaz 2011), as do advances such as Clarke's situational analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007: 427).

Etherington (2004) confirms and argues that by using reflexivity in research we close the illusionary gap between researcher and the researched, and between the knower and what is known. For me personally this means emancipation for the marginalised.

Another role of a reflexive researcher is, according to Berg (2007), that researchers should make use of internal dialogue that repeatedly examines what the researcher knows and how the researcher came to know this. He or she must have an on-going conversation with him/herself and ensure that he or she does not merely report findings as facts, but actively constructs interpretations of experiences in the field and then questions how these interpretations actually arose Berg argues that the result of this process is 'reflexive knowledge' (2007: 179). Finlay (2002) also contends that qualitative researchers will attempt to be aware of their role in the co-construction of

knowledge, trying to make explicit how inter-subjective elements impact on data collection and analysis in an effort to enhance the trustworthiness, transparency and accountability of their research.

### **3.2.5 Recruitment**

Participants were recruited from an organisation called the Khulumani support group based in SA. It is one of many NGOs in the country which became prominent during the South African TRC, as it not only advocated for the victims of human rights violations but also became successful in lobbying the TRC to include a 'victim focus approach' in its mandate. Khulumani was formed in 1995 by survivors and families of victims of political conflicts in South Africa's apartheid past and it currently comprises 65,000 individuals from all nine provinces of South Africa. The word 'Khulumani' is a Zulu word which means 'speak out' and thus the pending TRC triggered the response from Khulumani members who felt that the Commission should be used to speak out about the past to ensure that such violations would never occur again. As there were many violations of human rights in SA, Khulumani vowed to ensure that the atrocities committed in the past were known, that there was a need to expose the truth about disappearances, assassinations, torture and other human right abuses condoned under the apartheid regime, to identify perpetrators. There was a need to address survivors and families of victims of these atrocities, in order to reclaim their dignity and their lives to be restored. The problem statement of Khulumani includes the fact that while all its members are survivors of apartheid-era political violence, most of them describe that they continue to be affected by the consequences of apartheid-era violence. However, over the past 19 years of its operations, Khulumani has developed considerable expertise in ways of reaching and supporting survivors of apartheid-era violations towards building their advocacy skills, and towards supporting their efforts to become self-reliant. Hamber (2009) argues that post TRC, the organisation continues to operate, lobbying for reparations for its members and being involved in a range of social and political issues: 'For example the group recently spoke out against xenophobic attacks in SA and on-going poverty' (Hamber 2009:5).

Khulumani's strategic thrusts are informed by three core functions:

- Lobbying and advocacy for redress for outstanding TRC issues such as the prosecution of those who failed to apply for amnesty
- Capacity building of provincial structures as part of the on-going move towards decentralisation and consequent sustainability
- The documentation of stories of success (written by Khulumani.net)

Recruitment took place in two provinces – Gauteng province (formerly Johannesburg) and Cape Town province.

I thought choosing the two different provinces would give more depth to the study and include more diverse views. Gauteng is more urbanised and industrialised than the Western Cape, which to all intents and purposes is a rural area, and this might provide insights into any differences in the functioning of the TRC. In addition, atrocities perpetrated differed in each area. Gauteng province experienced more police brutality in terms of unlawful and indefinite detentions, deaths in detention and torture, as well as atrocities perpetrated by the Inkatha Freedom Party, which was instigated by the South African security forces to wage war against the youth of the African National Congress. In contrast, the Western Cape's main atrocities involved forced removals under the Population Registration Act (1950), which classified people by race, and the associated Group Areas Act (1950), which stipulated where people should reside in racially zoned areas and which has been identified as the cause of many deaths in SA (Thompson, 2001: 190).

During the fact-finding period in 2008, the group of potential participants who attended received a lot of information regarding the study, but unfortunately by the time I returned to collect data in 2010, the people who were eventually recruited were not the same as the ones whom I had met in 2008. Some had moved, some had died, whilst others were not available for all sorts of reasons.

### **3.2.6 Participants**

Thirty members of the Khulumani organisation were recruited with the help of Khulumani staff: 16 in Gauteng province (formerly Johannesburg) and 14 in the Cape

Town area. Participants were black people who were the direct or indirect recipients of political violations of their human rights, perpetrated by agents of the apartheid state. Twenty one were women and nine were men. This sample size is considered more than adequate for a grounded theory study (Francis et al., 2010; Cresswell, 1998).

Prior to contacting Khulumani for help with the recruitment of participants for my study, I had tried to engage in snowball sampling. As I had no adequate list to use as a sampling frame, I initially contacted a former colleague who referred me for assistance to another colleague who was a lecturer and doing a PhD in a similar area: that is, the South African TRC. In the process of searching, I was also referred to local psychologists from the University of the Witwatersrand as well as the universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, where I had a very interesting conversation with a female black professor who did not wish to be interviewed about the TRC due to the criticisms and what she regarded as vilifications she had experienced following her work with the most notorious perpetrator in the history of apartheid, Eugene de Kock. I was eventually directed to Khulumani by another PhD student from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, who had also recruited from this organisation.

Once Khulumani was contacted, I was informed that in terms of numbers or sample size it would be impossible to secure a large number of members who testified to the TRC. However, I was also told that it would be possible to obtain a few from the Gauteng province and another set from the Western Cape Town region. We then agreed that securing about 15 in each province was manageable (see Table 3.1). Darlington & Scott (2002: 17) argue that it is often difficult to obtain representative samples in a qualitative context, and as the researcher seeks greater depth of understanding, there is an inevitable trade-off in the number of people able to be included in the study. Consequently, the question of generalisability is circumvented. Along these lines, Willig contends that we cannot generalise from small-scale qualitative research and it could be argued that if 'a given experience is possible, it is also subject to universalization' (Willig, 2001: 17). Participants' details follow, identified by pseudonyms.

**Table 3.2 Participants' profiles**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Province/area</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Submitted</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
1 Mr Khumalo	70	Gauteng/Soweto	M	1996	Pensioner/direct victim
2 Mr Sitole	44	Gauteng/Soweto	M	10/12/96	Unemployed/direct victim
3 Mrs Matola	65	Gauteng/East Rand	F	08/08/96	Pensioner/indirect victim
4 Mrs Thapelo	60	Gauteng/East Rand	F	05/08/96	Pensioner/indirect victim
5 Mrs Zwane	65	Gauteng/Sebokeng	F	05/08/96	Pensioner/indirect victim
6 Mrs Moya		Gauteng/Sebokeng	F	26/03/93	Indirect victim
7 Mrs Bohloko	69	Gauteng/Soweto	F	07/08/98	Pensioner/indirect victim
8 Mrs Tumelo	50	Gauteng/Sebokeng	F	07/08/96	Unemployed/applied for SP/indirect victim
9 Mrs Tshepo	65	Gauteng/Soweto	F		Pensioner/indirect victim
10 Mrs Thandanani	76	Gauteng/East Rand	F	08/07/93	Pensioner/indirect victim
11 Mrs Molemo	52	Gauteng/East Rand	F	1998	Unemployed, awaiting SP/direct victim
12 Mr Mathatha	40	Gauteng/East Rand	M	1998	Unemployed, awaiting DG/direct victim
13 Mrs Mangena	56	Gauteng/East Rand	F	1997	Unemployed, awaiting SP/indirect victim
14 Mrs Malema	60	Gauteng/East Rand	F	1997	Pensioner /indirect victim
15 Mrs Landela	76	Gauteng/East Rand	F	1997	Pensioner/indirect victim
16 Mr Lesedi	33	Gauteng/East Rand	M	1998	Doing piece jobs/direct victim
17 Mr Motsomotso	82	Western Cape	M	1996	Pensioner/ direct victim
18 Mr Phakade	55	Western Cape	M	1996	Unemployed, awaiting SP/direct victim
19 Ms Moyo	49	Western Cape	F	1996	awaiting SP/direct victim
20 Ms Mabena	59	Western Cape	F	1996	Unemployed, awaiting SP/direct victim
21 Mrs Zolani	57	Western Cape	F	1996	Applied for SP/direct victim
22 Mr Memela	69	Western Cape	M	1996	Pensioner /direct victim
23 Mr Vukile	66	Western Cape	M	1996	Pensioner /direct victim
24 Ms Morena	59	Western Cape	F	1996	Pensioner /direct victim

25 Mrs Dumela	74	Western Cape	F	1996	Pensioner/direct victim
26 Mrs Zolani	53	Western Cape	F	1996	Unemployed/direct victim
27 Mr Khuluma	60	Western Cape	M	1996	Pensioner/direct victim
28 Ms Lamola	50	Western Cape	F	1996	Unemployed, applied for SP/direct victim
29 Ms Lerato	57	Western Cape	F	1996	Unemployed, awaiting SP/direct victim
30 Ms Sello	50	Western Cape	F	1996	Training as bus driver/direct victim

### 3.2.7 Data analysis

As participants communicated in their chosen languages – that is, Sotho and Zulu in Gauteng and Xhosa in Cape Town – I had to spend a considerable amount of time translating the tape-recorded interviews, and more time was also spent in the subsequent transcribing of the interviews. All in all, I spent a whole year translating, transcribing and analysing simultaneously. As Agar (1996; 153, quoted by Oliver et al., 2005: 1273) contends, ‘Transcription is a chore’.

Darlington et al. (2002: 53) suggest that ‘qualitative research is labour intensive and time consuming, from data collection, through to analysis’. This is confirmed by Glaser and Strauss (1967: 43), who argue that ‘joint collection, coding, and analysis of data are the underlying operations’. The generation of theory, coupled with the notion of theory as process, requires that all should blur and intertwine continually, from the beginning of an investigation to its end.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim in preparation for analysis. Transcript-based analysis is the most rigorous and time-intensive choice for analysis (McLellan et al., 2003). Although Glaser did not originally advocate full transcription for grounded theory, most later grounded theory researchers advocate that a full record of the interview needs to be analysed to avoid ‘cherry picking’ the items in which the researcher is most interested (Charmaz, 2008a).

Oliver et al. (2005: 1274) argue that transcription is a powerful act of representation and a pivotal aspect of qualitative inquiry. The authors maintain that



researchers have begun to recognise the centrality of transcription in qualitative research . From these scholars we have learned how transcription can powerfully affect the way participants are understood, the information they share and the conclusion drawn. I chose to use 'towards reflection in transcription' as the method that best answered the question I was asking, and this helped me reflect on important transcription issues (Oliver et al., 2005: 1286).

Grounded theory is an inductive process involving theory building from close reading and coding of the interview data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990: 155), using grounded theory enables researchers to 'arrive at new perspectives and approaches that are important in the advancement of knowledge'. The analysis process starts with multiple readings of the transcript in a spirit of openness and receptivity.

Willig (2001), Strauss and Corbin (1998) and latterly Charmaz (2006) suggested the following analysis process:

- initial coding and categorising of data;
- concurrent data generation or collection and analysis;
- writing memos;
- theoretical sampling;
- constant comparison;
- analysis using inductive and abductive logic;
- theoretical sampling;
- intermediate coding;
- selecting a core category;
- theoretical saturation and theoretical integration.

Charmaz (1995: 36) suggests that open coding starts with line-by-line analysis to capture participants' views, feelings, actions and experiences. She advocates becoming aware of participants' 'implicit meanings and taken-for-granted concerns'. Constant comparative analysis, which involves comparing portions of text both within and between sources of data, and between data and emerging constructs, was employed.

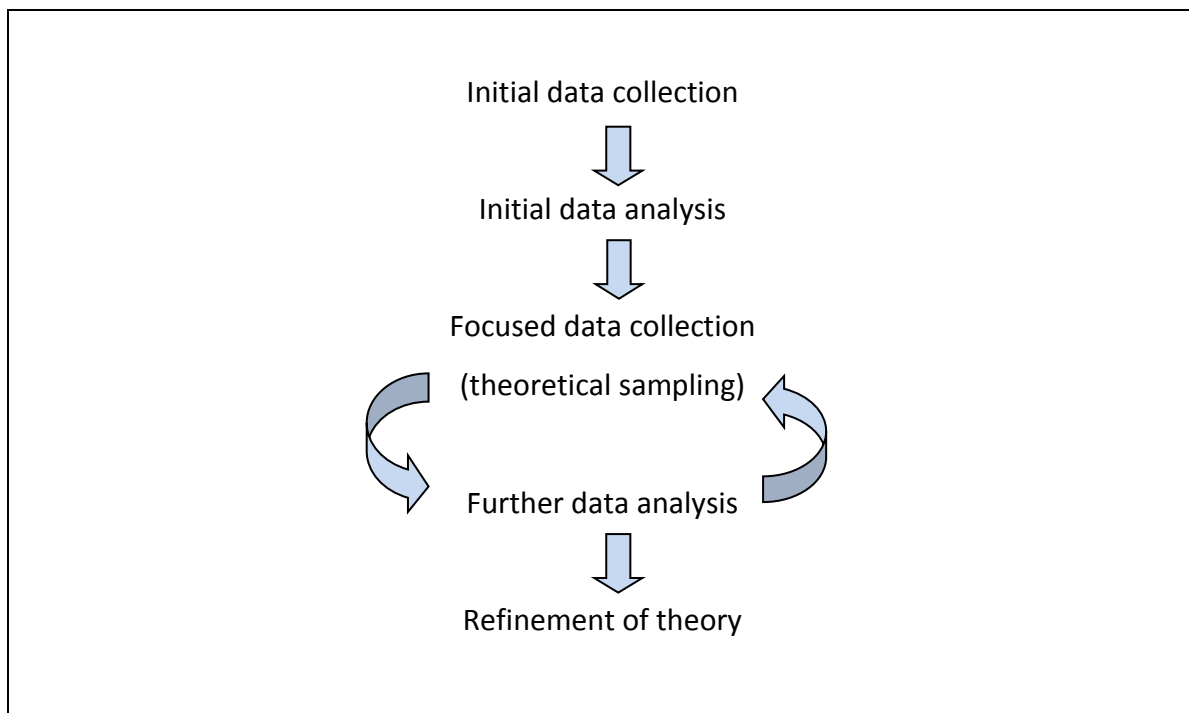
In addition, it was important to conduct 'negative case analysis', so that data that did not fit within my research framework were not eliminated. According to Willig (2008)

negative case analysis allows the researcher to qualify and elaborate the emerging theory, adding depth and density to it, so that it is able to capture the full complexity of the data on which it is based.

A cycle of data generation and reduction was utilised. Interviews were scheduled after preparing a synopsis of a previous interview because, as data are obtained, tentative meaning is applied them, and as new data are obtained, those meanings are revised (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Figure 3.1 below shows a simple illustration of the process.

**Figure 3.1 Simplified illustration of interplay between analysis and data collection (Gilbert, 2008: 86)**



Charmaz (2006) refers to axial coding, the purpose of which is to sort, synthesise and organise large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding (Creswell, 2012). Axial coding, Charmaz (2006) further explains, relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data fractured during initial coding to give coherence to emerging analysis. This is Strauss and Corbin's (1998) strategy for bringing the data back into a coherent whole.

Grounded theory coding generates the ‘bones of analysis’ (Charmaz, 2006: 45). My mental visual image of this is of an archaeologist unearthing, bit by bit, pieces of bone, such as fingers, tibia, fibula, skull, etc. (initial coding), scattering them on the ground, and when he cannot find any more (state of saturation), starting to put the bones together, synthesising and ordering them to form a skeleton (focused coding). The archaeologist is then able to search for signs on these bones of age, size, gender, maybe even class (axial or theoretical coding) to explain the general state of the bones or to bring the bones together to form a coherent whole. The final stage of the process, which is the emerging theory, could be the flesh that archaeologist puts on the bones to form a body. The only missing element in this characterisation would be the *language*.

#### The process of analysing the data from both provinces.

The data analysis consisted of Charmaz’s (2006) methodology for initial, focused and theoretical coding. The data was initially coded line by line, naming the actions or events found within, a process called open coding (Duchscher, et al 2004). Duchscher, *et al* (2004:608) argue that ‘this microanalysis forces the *fracturing* of the substantive data’ with the aim of ‘*opening up* the inquiry’ (Strauss, 1987, p. 29). By doing this, Charmaz (2006:54) argues that grounded theorists ‘are moved towards fulfilling two criteria for completing a GT analysis: fit and relevance’. Categories, concepts and patterns of behaviour were extracted from the data through the use of the exact words of the participants, or *in vivo* coding, to ensure the findings were grounded in the data. For instance under the theme: ‘Disillusionment by unfulfilled promises’ the participant’s extract, ‘**I am still holding as empty coffin**’ exemplified the case of the category, ‘unrecovered dead bodies’. In the Western Cape, this extract from a participant, ‘**being shunted from pillar to post like a ping pong**’ illustrates contributing factors of this theme: forced removals and pass laws, consequences associated with ‘frequent detentions and constant harassments’ from the apartheid police, which in turn resulted in consequences such as ‘loss of homes, possessions and jobs’. During focused coding (or axial coding) the most significant or frequent initial codes were sorted, synthesised, integrated and this process gradually organised a *large amount of data* and re-assembled them in new ways after open coding (Creswell, 1998). Codes were developed into categories and incidents through a re-iterative process, coupled with creating

several visual charts of the emerging categories (the last of which are shown in the following chapters). Data were compared with data, categories with categories and incidents with incidents to develop the properties of the focused code. Constant comparison data analysis was used to move across the data, by comparison of the data with the codes, categories and concepts. The focused codes e.g. 'challenges of managing feelings around forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing' and 'feelings of betrayal' and 'suspended hope', were integrated and organised into a logical, coherent, emerging theory about victims of human rights violations' feelings of being '**misrecognised**' all over again by the process of the TRC (Holslander, et al 2009). Eventually a point of diminishing returns was reached, i.e. saturation, when repeated engagement with interview data seemed to add nothing to what I was already inferring about a category, its properties and its relationship to the core category.

The experiences that motivated participants in the two provinces were identified as different, i.e. in terms of the types of human rights violations and the timescales. For instance in Gauteng areas human rights abuses, whilst were primarily perpetrated by the apartheid security police, the most vicious atrocities occurred as a result of the conflicts between the ANC and IFP. Most of these took place in the 1990's following Mr Mandela's release from prison and during the negotiations for the handover of power to the ANC by the NP.

In the Western Cape, on the other hand, the apartheid repressive machinery was clearly paramount in the form of forced removals, with white security forces, (with black painted faces to hide their identities and masquerading as black officers), being instrumental in executing these atrocities. In addition atrocities in the Western Cape took place consistently since the NP gained power in 1948. However, when exploring the *legacy* of testifying to the SA TRC, the themes that emerged for both provinces were very much similar indicating that the manner in which repression took place was not all that important, i.e. the effects and longer-term meanings were similar. This was demonstrated by the similarity in the emergent themes shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> findings chart on p.184.

Copious notes were made in a separate note book and possible themes highlighted and noted on the transcripts margins. Cards were also used to record codes from earlier themes which were then checked against subsequent themes. As codes are

open-ended and provisional in GTM, some were 'reworded or revised to capture the phenomenon, improve the fit and possibly to grab the reader' (Charmaz, 2006: 48). For instance, feelings of resigned hope, fragmented healing, tenuous healing and ambivalent healing all were eventually revised/reworded and subsumed under the core category, '**Suspended Hope**'. Cards were also used to write memos which continued in parallel with data collection, note-taking and coding. As ideas occurred to me I would pause and write a memo to myself. These memos were usually about hypotheses I had about a category or property or relationship between categories. These would later be developed into theoretical analytic constructs. For instance, participants' feelings of being abused, used, ignored, let down and being betrayed were all synthesised to develop the core category entitled '**Misrecognition**'. The reflexive diary was used throughout the process of analysis to deal with challenging themes in order to avoid 'ignoring, glossing over or leaping beyond participants' meanings and actions' (Charmaz 2006: 49). This was also important for reflecting my insider's view. For instance the type of atrocities perpetrated by the IFP to victims of HRV including innocent children was difficult for me to comprehend. For me, these were truly 'unspeakable' deeds which challenged my assumptions about my knowledge of the SA situation. 'Black on Black' violence entered my mind as a possible theme even though I wrestled with the difficulty of acknowledging its true picture or existence. Some preliminary attempts at analysis occurred throughout transcription but the more systematic processes of data analysis took nearly nine months.

### **3.2.8 Credibility and rigour**

Credibility relates to 'how vivid and faithful the description of the phenomenon is' (Beck (1993: 264). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested that a study is credible when it presents such a vivid and faithful description that people who had that experience would immediately recognise it as their own. This is consistent with what Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued. They stated that the reader should 'almost see and hear the people' (quoted by Cooney, 2011: 19).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested techniques that make it more likely that credible findings and analysis will be the outcome, such as providing external checks on

the inquiry process; aiming to refine and broaden understanding; and providing for direct validation from human data sources.

Prolonged engagement with the topic and participants was important for establishing credibility. I have been involved in issues and activities relating to human rights abuses, firstly as a black South African woman with first-hand experience of apartheid atrocities, and also having worked in South Africa as a case, group and community worker. In all this I have been a facilitator and been inspired by and promoted emancipatory approaches to working with marginalised people, mainly South African people. I continued to work as a mental health worker when I left SA for the UK, and continued to help increase and build self-esteem and promote self-determination amongst marginalised communities. For instance, I was instrumental in setting up the only day centre for African-Caribbean mental health service users in Kensington and Chelsea, and provided regular training in mental health issues for migrant refugee communities in the borough.

I have shown credibility to my participants by being trustworthy, sincere and transparent, and this was evidenced by participants' feelings and responses: that is, being approachable, friendly, kind, self-aware and sympathetic/empathic (Tracy, 2010: 842 Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Rigour is concerned with, amongst other things, care in data collection (Tracy, 2010: 841). According to Tracy, questions to consider about rigour include the following:

- Are there enough data to support significant claims?
- Did the researcher spend enough time to gather interesting and significant data?
- Is the context or sample appropriate, given the goals of the study?
- Did the researcher use appropriate procedures in terms of field note style, interviewing practices, and analysis procedures?

As mentioned above, I tried to follow procedures of qualitative analysis and especially the principles of the grounded theory method. I did single interviews with each participant due to limitations in time and money. My workplace agreed to give a sabbatical for only 2 months, during which I had to cram in 30 interviews. The first week of my arrival in SA was spent at Khulumani headquarters dealing with general

administrative arrangements: that is, sorting out plans of how and when the interviews could start, and checking issues regarding health and safety and accessibility. This included meeting with a named member of staff to decide when the interviews could begin, and going through the written information about the study so that by the time the interviews started the named person had all details. This became very important as the named worker was a new one who knew very little about my study. The person who had been involved from 2006 had recently been replaced by this new person, a change for which it was difficult to find out the reasons. However, the new person learned very quickly and in a short space of time was very efficient in making preparation for the commencement of the interviews. The same issue arose in the Western Cape, where the person with whom I had originally arranged recruitment had been replaced by a new one. I decided not to make a fuss about this, as at least support was made available to me for the duration of the interviews.

It was not possible to return to SA for any further collection of data. Tracy (2010: 841) argues that high-quality research is marked by a rich complexity of data; in my case, the richness came about through the number of participants I included in the sample as well as interacting and immersing myself in the data that I collected, and the on-going use of reflexivity. I also had regular supervision sessions and annual reviews with my supervisor to ensure I was following the correct procedures. In addition to taped recordings, I kept copious notes and a reflective journal, and wrote successive memos throughout the research process which kept me involved in the analysis represented an audit trail (Charmaz, 2011).

In summary, Glaser and Strauss (1967: 235) argue that 'a great deal of sociological work, unlike research in physical science, never gets to the stage of rigorous demonstration because the social structures being studied are undergoing continuous change'. They argue that undue emphasis on being 'scientific' is simply not reasonable in light of our need for discovery and exploration amid very considerable structural changes.

Cooney (2010) argues that care in applying the GTM correctly is the single most important factor in ensuring rigour. Although I do not profess to have been fully engaged in GTM, I have concerned myself with 'best practice in the conduct of research' (Cooney, 2010: 18).

Further discussion on rigour will take place in Chapter 7 when the research process is critically evaluated.





# **Chapter 4 Findings (1): Psychosocial processes leading participants to give testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the two research objectives:

- to explore the multiple personal, social and political events that led participants to testify to the TRC;
- to describe and understand the experiences of the survivors' preparation for appearing before the TRC;

The chapter presents the grounded theory analysis of the accounts of participants' issues and experiences prior to their first face-to-face contact with the TRC panel members. Many themes were identified, clustered and grouped using GTM principles and in accordance with their significance to the participants in being motivated to give testimony to the TRC. The themes and categories are shown in Figure 4.1 and each will be illustrated from participants' interview extracts.

Before moving to these themes, this chapter begins with a brief summary of participants' profiles in order to give the reader an outline of their socio-economic histories prior to their contact with the TRC. The chapter will highlight the themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews with both Gauteng and Western Cape participants relating to these particular research objectives. The themes from the two provinces are presented separately, as the participants' experiences of life during apartheid differed, and hence their motivations for giving testimony also differed in some respects.

The Gauteng area includes Soweto, an acronym for South Western Townships, which lies 15 km away from the city of Johannesburg and is made up of approximately 29 different townships with various ethnic groups and cultures. The East Rand/Vaal areas, on the other hand, are situated in the east of Johannesburg and during apartheid were scenes of heavy clashes between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party. The Western Cape was created in 1994 as part of the former Cape

Province, situated in the south-western part of SA and the fourth largest province in terms of both area and population. It has 5.8 million inhabitants with the 'coloured' community being the largest. Participants recruited in the study are from black townships called Gugulethu, Nyanga and Langa.

The chapter will conclude by highlighting the experiences and motivations for giving testimony that were shared by the two groups.

## **4.2 Profile of participants**

From the outset it was clear that Khulumani members did not wish to be described as victims but wanted to be referred to as 'survivors', and they were against their experiences being pathologised. In other words, they did not perceive themselves as helpless people waiting to be redeemed. I appreciated and respected these views as they were consonant with my perception of my role, not as an observer but as someone co-constructing realities with them. However, I wanted to highlight that the experiences they had prior to, during and post-apartheid were bound to have had a negative impact on them, physically and mentally.

A total of 16 participants from Gauteng and 14 from the Western Cape were recruited. The sample comprised, 21 women and 9 men: 12 women from Gauteng and 9 from the Cape and 4 men from Gauteng and 5 from the Cape, with an age range of between 33 and 82 years, as indicated in Table 3.1. In Gauteng there were 5 direct victims/survivors: 2 older men from Soweto and 2 younger men from the East Rand and 1 woman from Soweto. In all, 11 women were indirect victims, as defined by the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995).

All 14 victims/survivors from the Western Cape were 'direct' victims. Direct victims included all those victims described by the 1995 Act as direct recipients of human rights abuses such as indefinite detention and torture in detention, whilst indirect victims were those victims who were relatives or friends of victims who had died. The pseudonyms I gave them (see Table 3.1) had meaning in their stories and made sense to me as well.

Most of the participants came from financially under-resourced backgrounds. None had a college qualification. However, most had diverse semi-skills which they

acquired as they were working for different employers. One, Mrs Thapelo from Sebokeng, qualified as a nurse assistant and was employed at that time in the local hospital. One other woman, Ms Sello, was training as a bus driver. Most did manual work and had been employed as domestic servants or garden 'boys'. The majority of the men were previously employed in mining and industrial companies; however, most of them were unemployed at the time of the interviews in 2010 for various reasons, including poor physical health, mental health difficulties or old age. In addition, many stated that there was a lack of job opportunities – some said they could still work if opportunities were presented to them. In the Western Cape, in particular, keeping down a job became impossible as most participants repeatedly lost their jobs due to the transient lifestyle imposed on them as a result of the government's policy of forced removals and Pass Laws.

The high number of women in the Gauteng sample may result from the fact that most of their men died and left them as widows. Most of the men died, not directly as victims of human rights violations as defined by the TRC, but indirectly – for example, due to heart problems. Their wives attributed their early deaths to their difficulty in coping with the death of a son or daughter and in some cases the deaths of more than one child. Most direct victims were young activists.

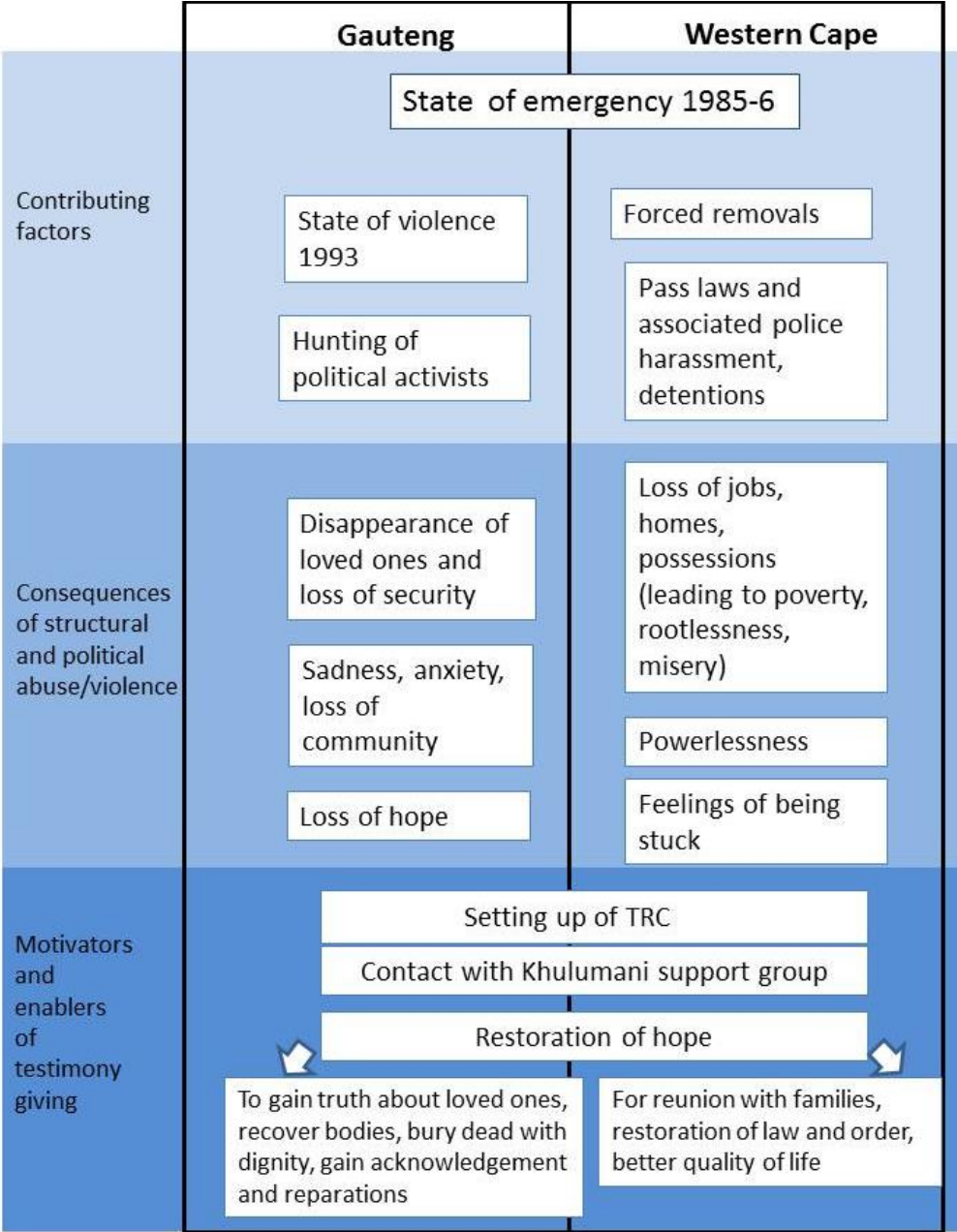
Participants described a variety of difficult circumstances. For example, the employed nurse assistant, Mrs Thapelo, lived with relatives in Sebokeng (East Rand) and claimed that this caused problems:

I live with my sister and her children in her home. It is not easy at all. The atmosphere is always tense and I and my children are not comfortable. My children are not free to move about or touch anything as they wish. Every time my youngest tries to open the fridge I have to stop her... I'm doing so for fear of her being told off. My sister's children are unhappy with us sharing their space and are making things difficult for my children. Please find me a home.

This is just one example of the legacy of apartheid in SA, resulting from its policies and the atrocities perpetrated by the apartheid regime, which affected participants' lives directly. Where people survived, the employment they had (or could not find), their health and sense of future had all been affected by events in the past.

I will elaborate further below on how and what type of experiences affected the participants in the Gauteng area prior to their presentation to the TRC, and will use my grounded theory model (see Figure 4.1) to explain how these experiences shaped their daily lives and informed their motivations to testify.

**Figure 4.1 Experiences recalled as motivating the giving of testimony to the TRC**



### **4.3 Grounded theory model of categories identified from the Gauteng interviews**

This chapter presents the grounded analysis of the accounts of participants' issues and experiences prior to their first face-to-face contact with the TRC panel members. In order to highlight the differences between the two provinces, I have divided the findings from each area into two sections, so that the reader can understand and learn the manner in which the apartheid system dealt with different races, the term called 'divide and rule', and how these experiences generated somewhat different motives for giving testimony at the TRC. These differences were deduced from the analysis of participants' accounts, which will be supported by the interview extracts.

The model shown in Figure 4.1 represents the experiences of the participants prior to their presentation to the TRC. Nine main themes motivated testimony giving, identified from the interviews: namely, state of emergency; state of violence; hunting down of political activists; disappearances; sadness and pain; loss of hope; creation of the TRC; the Khulumani support group; and restoration of hope. All these themes were divided into subcategories. Sometimes subcategories overlapped and ended up being treated together as one. The themes and their subcategories were identified following detailed line-by-line coding and as a result of their salience. The first three themes represented causal factors in grounded theory terms, whilst the next three themes represented psycho-social consequences of the disappearance of loved ones and loss of security, for instance. The last two themes, the Khulumani support group and restoration of hope, highlighted the beginning of hope (motivations), as in 1995 the TRC was formed to address human rights atrocities experienced by victims/survivors. In addition, the support and advice that Khulumani provided was a catalyst in encouraging and preparing the survivors to submit their testimonies to the TRC. At this point, participants reported the establishment of both the TRC and Khulumani as providing an opportunity for change.

### 4.3.1 State of emergency (1985–6)

Participants reported that this was a particularly difficult time for everyone in the country, especially in the townships, as the government regulations gave every police officer broad powers of arrest, detention and interrogation without warrant; empowered the police commissioner to ban any meetings; prohibited all coverage of unrests by television and radio reporters; and severely curtailed newspaper coverage. They said, as confirmed by Thompson (2001: 235) that it was 'legalised tyranny'. Forty-year-old Mr Mathatha from Sebokeng said:

For us the youth it was worse. We knew that we were being targeted by the government on one side and the IFP on the other. At the same we were intent on manning the streets to prevent a total onslaught on our members. We paid a price though; the IFP rounded us up, locked about 12 of us in a tiny shack and started assaulting us with machetes and shamboks.

Mr Mathatha said they felt like cattle being herded into an abattoir for slaughter. He said he felt helpless and had almost given up. Mr Lesedi (aged 30) said of that period: 'After all the beatings that we received sometimes I wonder how come we're still alive.'

After listening to how they were beaten up, I too was wondering how they got through those experiences. I imagined that for young people, as the two men above were at the time, any act of violence could have ruptured the senses. The intensity of the violence in young people might be represented differently due to lack of psychological maturity, but these two young men explained similar events in the same way at different times, as they were both part of the group that had been locked into a shack for hours, awaiting their fate. When asked what meaning they attached to those experiences, Mr Mathatha replied: 'I don't mind very much receiving that kind of treatment from the whites because that's what we've come to believe and expect but from the IFP, it's something I can't deal with.'

This might have been particularly difficult for Mr Mathatha because he belonged to the same ethnic group as those loyal to the IFP: that is, Zulu. Here he made reference to the 'black on black' violence that had become part of the NP strategy (see Chapter 1).

This concept of 'black on black' violence has been applied very loosely to refer to black people, which, in the SA context, included coloured, Indians and Africans and could also have meant conflicts involving different ethnic groups within the black population; in that case, this could have been a question of settling 'old scores'. The concept will be explored further in Chapter 6.

### **4.3.2 State of violence**

Following the state of emergency, a combination of events took place during 1993, which contributed to the mayhem that participants recalled experiencing during that period. These incidents created a lot of confusion, anxieties and agitation in the townships. Parents reported anxieties regarding the number of young teenage boys who were being tracked down and were subsequently arrested, detained indefinitely or murdered under mysterious circumstances. In particular, a group of three young ANC activists called the 'Mofolo 3' had been ambushed, booby trapped and blown up by a bomb left for them by security officers. I interviewed two of the mothers of these young men. One of the mothers, Mrs Tshepo, a 65-year-old from Soweto (no. 9 in Table 3.1), said:

It was a war ... in the townships. Nobody understood what was going on. Our children were all over the place. As ANC members they felt they had to do something – take control of the confusion. There was no order and no law. They thought they were fighting for the struggle. Some had already stopped attending school. After my son and others disappeared we heard that they had been smuggled outside the country to attend school abroad.

Mrs Tshepo said she had no idea where 'abroad' her son had gone, until she found out months later, in the newspapers, that her son and two others had been blown up and thrown in the crocodile river, i.e. a river infested with crocodiles by Botha's security forces. She said this felt unreal, like a movie being played right in front of her eyes. She said she thought she was having a nightmarish dream and would soon wake up to find it was not true.



In the Sebokeng township, Mrs Matola reported that Chris Hani's memorial service was one of the contributors to the prevailing mayhem. Chris Hani was the leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC's chief of staff, leading its armed struggle wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe. He had been assassinated by a white man called Yanus Walsz, a Polish immigrant who, together with 'a National Party MP' is currently serving a life sentence in prison for the murder. She said:

Mam, we experienced a lot of problems during that year – 1993. At the time there was a lot of wars which we did not know where they were coming from. This year – I'm telling you, this year took a lot out of people's lives. I was also caught up in these wars. My daughter was out and whilst on her way back home, that's when she stumbled across this problem.

When I asked what these wars were about, she continued:

Right, we were watching television whilst my husband was asleep as he had just got back from work – he was tired. We were a happy family with my husband working to support this family. Now whilst watching TV we heard noises from outside. We had been watching TV because it was Chris Hani's memorial. We were watching to see the news about this memorial service. Whilst still watching the news we heard shots being fired – about four times. These shots sounded very near our home. So we got scared – we decided to switch off the lights and we switched off the TV to stop the flashing lights filtering outside. As the noise of the shots sounded as if they were approaching our house we ran into our bedrooms – in the dark, we got under the sheets and locked all doors and pretended we were asleep. We were all wondering what this was about.

The same confusion was echoed by a young man, Mr Mathatha, also from Sebokeng, who made the following comment on the mayhem: 'During those fights I was in the house – like at night—at around 8 p.m., no, actually it was 8.30 p.m.' I asked exactly what these fights were about. This is the explanation he gave:

Riots – they were violence and then, so on that day it was a Sunday, on the 4th, no, on the 3rd, a man that belonged to IFP had just been shot. He lived in the same local area I lived in. It was actually in 2000 – eh, no, it was 1993. This man who was shot was taken into hospital and when he came back from hospital, we were told that he knew who shot him and he was out to get them ...

Most participants appeared confused about what the main cause of these wars was. There were too many events taking place at the same time. Whilst some blamed the chaos on the effects of Chris Hani's memorial service, where ANC youths were running amok threatening to avenge his death, others blamed it on the IFP, which was believed to be avenging the shooting of one of its members; some ascribed the chaos to the on-going state of lawlessness in the townships. It was difficult for participants to pinpoint exactly the 'who's and 'why's of the origins of these wars.

I imagine that the confusion of not knowing what was going on and who was responsible for it must have been very distressing for most participants. In such situations, people tend to make up their own stories to help them understand or interpret the situation. For instance, in the case of Mrs Tshepo above, her story about her son's disappearance contrasts with the report recorded at the Khulumani office, where it was said that her son was booby-trapped and consequently blown to pieces. As this action appeared extreme in her mind, she probably found it hard to comprehend such brutality, in which case it was better for her to enact a story that made it possible for her to conceptualise: that is, her son was shot dead and thrown into the river. At the same time, due to the chaos engulfing the country, it could be (and it does happen) that such stories have a tendency to make people inadvertently distort the facts.

Most participants recalled that the apartheid government created a space or conditions which were conducive to violence. Whilst the IFP was covertly sanctioned by the government to commit violent acts towards everybody and not just ANC members, the ANC also created conditions which, through the programme of economic boycotts, made it dangerous for people to purchase food from certain supermarkets. Participants remembered those 'awful' days when mothers who had bought food from these shops were made to eat whatever they had bought right there in the streets, for all to witness.

### ***State of lawlessness***

Participants reported a general period of lack of law and order (in the mid-1980s and 1990s), as a result of which there were reports of a heavy presence of the state's repressive military and paramilitary squads in the townships. These included the South African Police, the South African Defence Force (SADF) and Stability Forces, with heavy armoured vehicles (Caspars) and army helicopters circling the townships.

The 33-year-old Mr Lesedi, from Sebokeng, who was a teenager and belonged to the ANC youth league then, explained his understanding of the situation in this way:

There were two reasons why there was such violence and lawlessness in the townships. One was because some people did not understand why we, as the ANC youth, were organising economic boycotts, especially people who came from the rural areas to work in the mines. Secondly one of the IFP members was shot dead and this caused a whole lot of trouble for everybody as now IFP members vowed to avenge his death.

However, whilst Mr Lesedi was rational about the situation, Mrs Malema, also from Sebokeng, expressed agitation and distress about the general situation:

I will never forget those days – I tell you those days were painful days. Not only that, my son was in the youth league and because of the boycotts they were charged with patrolling the streets of the township. I knew I could not stop him from being part of the struggle but like all mothers whose children were out there patrolling, especially at night, I used to spend sleepless nights. Every time I think about those days I get sick – sick, sick in my stomach.

I asked her what actually was taking place. She replied:

There was a white van being driven recklessly around the location. In it were several men who were shooting everywhere and everything they came across. You could hear shots being fired from all over – starting from far and getting nearer to our house. If you were out there, you were not guaranteed to be alive

the next day. I was told afterwards that this van was full of IFP members avenging the death of one of their members. The idea of my son being out there unprotected made me wild and I was in such a state that I had no idea what I was doing. I went out there to check on my son against better judgement and advice from family.

Fortunately a male neighbour who saw Mrs Malema running aimlessly and behaving hysterically in the streets managed to grab her and led her safely back home before she fell foul of the outrage that was taking place outside. Mrs Malema said she had never been faced with such a dilemma in her life: that is, to stay safe at home or to brave the violent situation in an attempt to rescue her son.

During this period, it was known in the country that the IFP was recruited and armed by the apartheid system to cause mayhem with a view to derailing the ANC's organised strikes. My reflexive journal reflects this issue of relentless killings;

Date: 02/06/2010: There are two issues that are difficult to understand with the IFP members. Firstly, whilst they are members of a well-recognised political movement under a well-known leader, Gatsha Buthelezi, secondly they are also an authentic and homogenous cultural group. The membership of this organisation is solely Zulu. In their quest for justice they were fighting a political battle simultaneously as they were fighting for cultural hegemony. As such it became difficult for other national groups in the country to conceptualise this double role. To complicate an already complicated set of relations, according to some cultures it has become difficult for political activists to reconcile cultural practices where certain norms require retribution in order to right wrongs. For instance within certain cultural frameworks it was the responsibility of families to avenge the death of a person in order to allow his spirit to rest. One would suspect that that was the case with this van that was been driven by IFP members in the Sebokeng township, shooting everyone and everywhere in a desire to appease the dead. Or maybe it was just another 'tit for tat' situation.

As Moosa (2001: 216) has asserted in the case of forgiveness and amnesty in the South African TRC, by exacting revenge by some customary practices: 'This was an interesting subverting of the TRC's doctrine of "Truth: The road to reconciliation"'. However, one thing is for sure: this created a whole lot of confusion in relationships between black and black, ANC and IFP, black and white, Xhosa and Zulu, and rural Zulu against urban Zulu.

***Heavy presence of state military and paramilitary units***

Military units were sent in to protect the communities, but participants reported having to live daily in the presence of these 'unwelcomed/unwanted' and unsightly units, which provoked nothing but tensions amongst communities. Mr Lesedi from Sebokeng reported:

Yes these wars in 1993 – they caused the government of the Boers to bring in these military units. It was called the stability force and it looks like, I'm not too sure, it came from Bloemfontein. It was made up of soldiers wearing blue uniforms but there was too much confusion to know exactly who was doing what – at least they were supposed to be protecting the public.

Some participants reported that these military units appeared to have had a bigger presence in the East Rand than in Soweto, and most believed that they were causing more problems than they were maintaining order or protecting communities. Mr Lesedi said:

Before the stability force occupied the townships we were all friendly to each other – IFP and ANC. We had amicable relationships. We were also neighbours or at least we thought we were all neighbours until the stability forces came between us. We later realised that these hostel workers<sup>1</sup> were hired to kill us. We did not know but we were surprised that they were actually brought in to 'finish us off'.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the 'hostel dwellers' were mine workers and belonged to the IFP.

Sebokeng is populated by people who originated in Zululand, and members of the IFP are mainly Zulu-speaking people. For the rural Zulus to turn against urban Zulus, and vice versa – part of the ‘black on black’ violence that was mentioned several times in the interviews – must have been a shock.

Mr Mathatha, a member of the ANC youth league, said:

In the olden days we got along very well together with the IFP. There were no problems. For instance during December festivities or in Easters we would organise football matches and compete with each other. We would end up buying loads of food – slaughter a goat or cow with lots of alcohol and enjoy ourselves. The team that wins, for instance if it’s the hostel team, we would visit them at the hostel and be treated like guests and be thoroughly fed and vice versa.

Asked what changed all this amicable relationship, he responded by saying:

Personally I think all changed when the white government realised we were getting on together too well. But the other issue was when the ANC organised a ‘stay away’ from work boycott, things turned sour. To be honest IFP miners came to work for their families and if they didn’t work they didn’t get paid. The white officials took advantage of this vulnerability and started encouraging them to boycott the boycotts organised by the ANC. Not only that but we also believe that they supplied them with weapons to attack rivals. This is how this whole thing started.

Mr Lesedi and Mathatha were the only men from the East Rand area who were direct victims/survivors and were teenagers at the time of the conflicts between ANC and IFP. They both belonged to the ANC youth league and were regularly patrolling in Sebokeng as part of the ANC’s strategy to control the streets – or as they put it, to protect their communities from the IFP onslaughts. Mr Lesedi said: ‘Eh, the IFP felt empowered to reject the ANC’s strategy of engagement in economic boycotts because they were

supported by the government and most importantly they were heavily armed. With our sticks and stones we stood no chance against guns and machetes.’

For these young people, the knowledge that they were faced with an invincible opposition of older men, well armed and supported by the government, was terrifying for them and would probably have a long-lasting and negative impact on them, in their attitude not only towards the state but also towards older people whom they had always been taught to respect.

### **4.3.3 Hunting down of political activists**

In trying to create and gain control over the black townships, the NP government proclaimed a state of emergency and, according to participants, went out of its way to target young people, whom it regarded as troublemakers and a threat to national security. This section highlights how it did that.

#### ***Targeting and killing of youths***

In Gauteng, participants believed and reported that mainly secondary school black boys were targeted. Mrs Tshepo from Soweto said this about her son’s disappearance:

My son, Zola, and the other boys were constantly hunted and harassed by the security police. As I was working it was difficult for me to keep track of his movements. He was all over the place, hiding from one place to another. Later on he and the others were not seen for months until eventually we heard that the ANC has helped them to escape out of the country. We were told that they had skipped and had immigrated broad where they will receive better education.

According to Mrs Tshepo, the promise of a better education and life abroad apparently came from the ANC authorities. Coincidentally, the mother of another boy in the ‘Mofolo 3’ said she was absent from her family home because she was working as a domestic servant in a white family home. Most often, she had no idea about the whereabouts of her son, even though she had left him in the care of a relative. Mrs Snoma said:

My sister, I will be honest with you – as for me I could not tell half the time where Ndaba [her son] was as he was very much involved in the ANC's activities. As I was employed as a 'live in' domestic servant I could not supervise Ndaba. He was at the time being cared for by my cousin who was also having difficulties keeping him in one place. I had to work to support my other children otherwise I would have lost my job. I'm aware that the police were tracking him down. They've actually been once, twice or even thrice at my employer's home to look for him. They thought I had hidden him there. This really worried me because I thought I was going to lose my job.

This part of the conversation highlighted another important issue regarding the experiences of black women/mothers who had to work as domestic servants, living in and caring for the children of 'white madams'. Their own children were sometimes left at home on their own without sufficient supervision, or with neighbours or relatives who were often unable to exercise proper control over them. My reflexive diary extract below explores this:

13/05/10. I appreciated the dilemma that these women were faced with – stop working to supervise your children at the cost of losing a job which in the end might lead to poverty. What's the choice there? There is no choice. It's a vicious cycle. Actually on pondering further on this dilemma, I remembered how I used to visit various prisons searching for my brother and nephews who had been arrested by virtue of just either being young African boys or involved in politics. (Something akin to the British 'sus laws' then). I could do this because I had a car that took me from one point to the other and there was no chance that I was going to lose my job because my employer refused to give me some time off. I could use my leave to achieve this objective. At this point it had become clear to me that in SA being political is not a choice. Politics is thrust into people. The social is really political.



### ***Constant harassment of families***

Most participants remembered the days when the police would violently knock on their doors, waking up adults and children alike, demanding to see who had or did not have a permit to live in the city, searching for illegal immigrants, or searching for illegal traditional beer that most township women brewed using sorghum and sold to augment their or their husbands' wages.

Of course, some participants confessed to hiding illegal immigrants: for example, supporting distant relatives coming from homelands where jobs were either scarce or non-existent, and seeking better jobs in the city. Some families hid political activists, as did Mrs Thapelo who belonged to the ANC women's league:

Yes, I did hide some of the MK members who were seeking refuge after they returned from exile. It was in 1992 and I was in my home with my daughter, my uncle who was an MK and 3 other MK youths. These children were constantly harassed and attacked by the Boers, so they had to be moving from one place to the other – trying to hide from the security police. On this particular day very early in the morning we were woken up by aggressive knocking on my door and windows being shattered. There were also loud noises outside commanding us to come out. When I got up the boys were already standing in the main corridor leading to the door. But this time the police entered and pulled my uncle and the boys outside and shot at them, after they promised me they would not shoot – me and my daughter were the only survivors of that onslaught ...

This was a bold act on the part of Mrs Thapelo. Clearly she knew that harbouring what were referred to as 'enemies of the state' was guaranteed to result in the outcome described above. By engaging in this action she jeopardised her own safety and that of her family. But when people are committed to certain causes, it is difficult to dissuade them. Despite what happened, she claimed that she would do it all over again. She said it was distressing to witness the murder of those young people and in the process the loss of her own uncle, but she believes that this was part of the struggle. This is how she commented afterwards: 'If not them, it could have been me or my daughter for that matter. In the struggle you expect casualties.'

At the time of interview she seemed brave and confident in her convictions but I wondered how deeply she was affected by these events at the time. Could the passage of time have helped her reconcile the events and look at them in a more philosophical manner? At the time of the interview, all she was looking forward to was how the TRC or government was going to help her have a roof over her and her daughter's head. Her socio-economic needs appeared to be overriding her psychological needs. It was surprising that in 1992, when the negotiations were taking place after Mandela and others were released from prison, such violence was still being perpetrated.

I found that participants would express traumatic events or experiences in physical rather than psychological terms. Most participants confirmed having heart problems or other medical conditions when expressing distress and devastation. The only psychological symptom that Mrs Thapelo expressed was unhappiness with her current socio-economic situation and her hope that presenting to the TRC would lead to progress in that sense. I suspected that being a member of Khulumani, with its stance on not pathologising grief and trauma, might have an influence on how participants tended to explain their distress away. Contrary to the government's concern about the ANC's perceived threat, participants reported the devastation caused by the IFP as being more atrocious than what the ANC was feared to have intended or planned. Mrs Matola of Sebokeng confirmed this carnage:

We didn't know because it was at the time of Hani's memorial service. When it became dusk on that day we heard that there were so many people being shot at 12th avenue – we heard that it was here and there – all over. It was a white van, chasing people around in the streets – it was shooting at these people who went to Hani's memorial. I understand there were corpses everywhere. I believe corpses that were counted on that day were more than 20 ...

My difficulty in understanding this carnage is reflected in my reflexive journal below:

Since I've known that IFP were a rival organisation to the ANC organisation I have found it difficult to understand what the apartheid regime could have told it about their rival. For a group of grown men having left their homes in Kwa-

Zulu Natal to come and work in the mines of Johannesburg to turn into such bitter opponents to another black organisation, defies belief. It is also incorrect to refer this organisation as an opposition of the other, if anything it should be an opponent of apartheid and fighting for justice alongside the ANC and other political movements in the country, albeit using different methods. Whilst the apartheid regime has been systematically brutal in its treatment of black people of South Africa and this treatment being unequalled anywhere else in the world, except of course the KKK towards slaves in the US, it has been baffling to have to compare the atrocities perpetrated by IFP towards black people and even to people of the Zulu nation. I often think about the devastation caused by colonialism to people who have been invaded and one country that usually comes to mind is Congo under the rule of the Dutch. In trying to explain the behaviour of the Boers towards the black population in South Africa, Anjie Krog (1999) blames the remnants of the British brutality towards the Boers when they were in power and she calls that unresolved issues of colonialism. However, this still does not explain the behaviour of the IFP towards ANC members.

### ***Random killings of innocent women and children***

As in most war situations, vulnerable people such as women, children, the aged and the infirm will always be easy targets. Most participants, especially in the East Rand, reported several sexual assaults on young women, leading to their deaths. Again in this area participants reported most perpetrators being members of the IFP. Whilst their mission was to target ANC youth, in the process they abducted, sexually assaulted and killed women. Mrs Molemo explained:

My daughter was out with her boyfriend and when they did not return that night we started to become concerned. As there was so much shooting outside we had no idea where they could be. For days thereafter we searched everywhere for them – hospitals, prisons, mortuaries – until one day we heard there was a dead body of a female dumped in the forest nearby. I knew then

that this was the end for me as her mother. True to my instincts when we arrived it was her. She had been sexually assaulted before being murdered. We later learned that her boyfriend was also murdered and dumped somewhere else. Since then I have not been able to attend a funeral – especially of young women.

In responding to a question I asked following her comments about random killings, Mrs Matola said:

Yes, they were shooting randomly – even entering people’s houses – wherever there was a light, they entered. There was one woman who was shot as well as about eight people who were in her house – as well as sleeping children – just recklessly shooting people in their beds. Children went to bed and never woke up. The van apparently arrived between 3 to 4 a.m. Three more people were shot in one street together with their children in their bedrooms – shocking!

Such horror stories in which innocent children are victims compel one to think about other atrocities that were not reported. Sometimes participants related these experiences as if they were a normal part of their everyday lives. Whilst most female participants shared their stories and became emotional in the process, most male participants behaved as if these experiences took place yesterday. However, it was obvious that they had been deeply affected by them.

I found that the male participants tended to brush off experiences no matter how atrocious, as if they thought they might be accused of being silly or childish should they show or accept their emotions. Whilst female participants highlighted how distressed they were about these events and experiences, men were more philosophical and tried to be rational. One case is Mr Sitole from Soweto, who became paralysed following a bomb explosion in which he was involved. I spent some time in the interview trying to find out what sense and meaning he ascribed on this atrocity. He said: ‘I don’t dispute the fact that my life has changed drastically but life goes on. Right now I need to think about how I and my family are going to survive.’ It seemed the women were talking about how distressed they were emotionally and psychologically, whilst men were

thinking rationally and wanting to know how they were going survive socially and economically. I wondered what implications this might have in the future when attempting to assist survivors in dealing with the effects of their trauma.

#### **4.3.4 Disappearances**

In Gauteng, disappearances of political activists were rife, according to participants. This was confirmed by the Khulumani support group, which has compiled a dossier of all these disappearances.

##### ***Targeting the youth***

Apart from the 'Mofolo 3', mentioned earlier, participants attested to the disappearance of many political activists. These disappearances took place on a large scale in Soweto and the man considered responsible for this was Eugene De Kock. This man's name was mentioned every time participants reported who, from the government, was responsible for gross human rights violations. During the ANC's non-violent campaigns, including bus and economic boycotts, young men were sent out to take control of the streets in the townships, a situation to which the state responded by getting the IFP to intercept them. Mrs Mabena, the mother of an ANC youth who became mentally ill following assaults by the IFP, said:

... these children were injured on the 7th December 1993. I won't forget that day – it was awful and painful. I was supposed to have gone to work but nobody went to work due to the 'stay-aways'. Nobody ventured out because there was the ANC on one side stopping people from using buses or trains to work. On the other side there was the IFP chasing people out of buses and trains threatening them with various weapons. On that day ... at night we heard bullets being shot ... faraway at ... section. As I knew I have a son who goes out to patrol the streets ... with others – he was patrolling only one block A. These were all ANC teenagers belonging to the ANC youth league. Usually when they've finished patrolling they would assemble and hold a meeting in the shacks that they occupied and slept in. However shots continued to reverberate overnight and I found it difficult to settle down. As you know when you're a mother you can't

be complacent. So I went out to go and see if these children were safe and to check where the shots were coming from – by the way this was a time of wars.

My reflexive journal reflected the torment that mothers felt, especially when their children were in danger:

20/05/10. I understood quite well what she meant. It was a catch 22 situation. As a mother do you stop your children from being involved or do you let them be part of something that's regarded by most as a legitimate act of self-defence? Even though I thought of how brave Mrs Mabena was to confront the uncertainty of what lay out there in the darkness, I knew that mothers will always risk their lives to protect their young. At times like these mothers hardly ever think about their own safety. Priority lies with ensuring that vulnerable offspring is protected but how far can individuals go in protecting what they feel are their rights? Whites (soldiers ) in South Africa were made to believe that they were expected to protect what they called their (exclusive of whoever or whatever race shared that space) country by all means necessary irrespective of the consequences on anybody who is not identified as white. Young people are vulnerable and they readily obey orders. That's why it's easy in war torn countries for young people to be enrolled into combat.

Whilst the apartheid government was targeting young people, IFP members were busy harassing and molesting women and children, as shown in the next section.

### ***Violence, injury and death***

Participants reported that during that period of high tensions in the townships, multiple killings were the order of the day. The IFP and the ANC were competing to show who was in charge and tensions escalated to boiling point. Mrs Moya explained how her family was massacred by the IFP:

... we didn't know where these people were coming from. I believed that they were members of an organisation not known to us. I think they were from the

local hostels when they finished breaking windows and cutting down doors, they entered our houses and started slashing us with shumentshus [axes]. They killed my two daughters – they are now dead, dead [saying it as if to convince herself and crying faintly].

She continued:

I spent some time in hospital. My son was shot and the bullet stayed in his body for two weeks. He was taken to Johannesburg hospital where the bullet was removed. Their father was also chopped with axes and as he was already frail anyway he suffered a stroke as a result. My youngest was also stabbed – no one escaped the onslaught. One of my daughters had her baby on her back when she was assaulted. The baby fell on the floor. I don't know what happened thereafter, only remembering waking up at the hospital after I'd been unconscious for 2 weeks. All I wished for then was death. I really wished I had died.

This was a horrendous period for Mrs Moya. She said she would not take her own life, but these atrocities had highlighted to her how easy it would be to choose between life and death. She said it was one of those dilemmas about which only God could have a 'say'. She said her life was no longer in her hands. This clearly demonstrated how some survivors no longer felt they had control of their situation.

Like Mrs Moya, many were surprised that they had survived these traumatic experiences. Mrs Mangena had the following dialogue with the researcher (me).

*Mrs Mangena:* You see in 1993 I don't recall there being boycotts in the country. It was a time of jubilation. You see every time 'Bafana Bafana' had played and won, there's always jubilation and excitement in the country. Usually there'd be cars moving around and blowing horns, and so on. It would just be general excitement. However, my son died on that day. That's why I had this thing in my mind that these are people who knew me as my son was killed at the same spot where his father was killed.

*Researcher:* So both your son and your husband were killed. Was it by the same people?

*Mrs Mangena:* No my husband was killed by tribal wars between Zulus, Xhosas and Sothos, IFP and ANC – all that mess.

*Researcher:* Who actually shot him?

*Mrs Mangena:* Just by local boys – calling themselves ‘comrades’.

*Researcher:* Did they belong to any political organisations?

*Mrs Mangena:* I’m not sure – I really don’t know. I was hearing rumours that they were local boys – calling themselves ‘comrades’. You see during those times the boys used to move around in gangs, they didn’t even have ANC membership or IFP ones for that matter. They were just gangsters. When they attacked Zulus they used to say they’re going to kill ‘umdlwebe’ and when they have killed somebody they did not allow people to visit to offer condolences to the bereaved.

*Researcher:* How did you feel about all this then?

*Mrs Mangena:* As if that was not enough, my neighbour came to visit and accompanied me to go and bury my son and husband. When she got back she was killed – doused with petrol and set alight – they said they were setting an example with her.

*Researcher:* That must have been terrible for you. How have you dealt with all that?

*Mrs Mangena:* I still don’t know, recounting it still feels like it was yesterday but [pause] I am just taking each day as it comes.

Apart from feeling generally numb about a situation that was out of their control, for some participants the state of hopelessness has continued for such a long time that it has become part of their daily living and they have come to accept the situation as it is. They seem to have normalised their realities and are just surviving from day to today. They have stopped fighting and are hoping that something will happen one day to change their situation.



Participants reported that there was general confusion and distress and that nobody had any idea who was who and what was happening. Whilst some participants blamed the IPF, others blamed the ANC for the mess, and still others, the apartheid government. It was a time of confusion, lawlessness and violence. Participants reported that, whilst many were killed at the hands of the IFP, many more were left with serious physical and emotional scars. It was worse for younger participants because there were few prospects of work, and prospects of government assistance were even slimmer. Mr Mathatha said:

At my age I don't know if I'll ever do anything for myself. I was injured on my legs, I can't walk properly, I can't hear properly, and on top of that I'm HIV. I have no education – I spent my youth and adulthood fighting under the ANC and now I can't get help from anywhere.

Although Mr Mathatha received food parcels from social services and was waiting for the outcome of his application for a disability grant, like most participants he still wished he was able to work for himself.

More poignant, though, was the fact that on the day when Mr Mathatha came to see me he was supposed to have gone to sort out his benefits but felt that it was more important to come and talk to me. This was something I found to be the case with most participants – that most still wanted to talk about their experiences, 14 years after giving testimony to the TRC. I reflected on this in my diary:

03/05/10. I am amazed that after 17 years following their horrific experiences and 14 years after appearing before the TRC, participants still felt that there was a need to talk. What is this all about? Surely it can't be said that it was nice or good to be reminded of painful stuff. Neither can it be said that it is good, nor advisable to open old wounds, especially if it not done in a professional setting. Are we talking here about unresolved issues? Or are we seeing people stuck in their melancholia.

This may confirm that a one-off appearance at the TRC cannot necessarily translate into healing – an issue that will be explored further in the next chapter.

***Search for loved ones/loss of jobs/loss of financial security***

In searching for loved ones, participants reported having being shunted from one place to another, with the authorities unwilling to give adequate and relevant information and in some cases giving misleading information instead. Mrs Tumelo spoke about the troubles she experienced in search of her husband's body:

My husband went to work one day during these uprisings but never came back home. In searching for him I was shunted from one place to another without any of the institutions I contacted appearing to be keen on helping me recover his body even though at this early stage I did not believe he was dead ... his friend and colleague suggested we started inquiries at his workplace but when I got there I was told that his boss would not see me because he does not speak to 'blacks' which was a nonsense as most of his employees were black and I could not imagine him not speaking to people who were under his charge.

This again highlights how lawless and out of control the situation was, even for people in responsible positions. People had lost the 'Ubuntu' that should have been so much part of their communities' culture. The community spirit of cooperation, of sympathy and empathy, of respect and dignity, for people in distress has been eroded and had left participants feeling like they had lost their identity.

For most participants these prolonged searches for loved ones resulted in the loss of jobs for all those who were employed at the time. For other participants, job loss happened due to injuries sustained following being targeted by the security forces. Mr Sitole reported that a co-worker shot at him on the instructions of their boss, who was dissatisfied with his affiliation with the ANC and his acting as a representative of the ANC at work.

Whilst he was spending time at home trying to come to terms with his disability, Mr Sitole was hoping that the TRC or the new government of the ANC would see fit to reveal the truth and help him move on, mentally, socially and economically. He said he

had responsibilities as the breadwinner, a husband and a father of children who still needed educational support.

#### **4.3.5 Sadness and pain**

Most experiences during this period of unrest brought with them great levels of sadness and pain. Although many women were direct victims as activists in their own right, in both areas women often appeared to be the so-called indirect recipients of these experiences as they battled to search for disappeared loved ones, whilst men were directly on the receiving end of the atrocities: that is, being either tortured or killed. Mrs Tumelo expressed great sadness and pain, not only at her husband's disappearance and eventually assumed death, but also, more importantly, at not being able to bury him as his body had not yet been recovered. This is how she summed up the whole sad experience: 'Some of us are still holding "empty coffins" – how can we heal?'

The impact of the losses, pain and violence on the health of the participants was also immense. My reflexive journal reveals my concern about this:

20/05/10. At first I thought that the interviews were to blame for the coughing fits they had, some went on for a long time. In my third interview when I noticed that coffee, tea or water did not resolve the coughing, I realised that there is a common thread here. On discussing and exploring this further with a friend, a qualified nurse, she suggested that coughing could be a sign of a heart problem. In my 5th interview I decided to ask further questions about the coughing and it was confirmed that that particular participant had been diagnosed with a heart problem and was on treatment for it. Furthermore I checked with the other participants who had been coughing during the interviews and they all confirmed they were suffering from heart problems.

The four men in the Gauteng sample had experienced both mental and physical torture of one kind or another. Mr Khumalo, an ANC veteran from Soweto, claimed to have been detained indefinitely and tortured, resulting in his current speech impairment. He had 10 children whose mother died some years before and they relied

on him for support from his meagre state pension. Mr Sitole was wheelchair bound and dependent on his wife for support. Mr Mathatha, assaulted by the IFP, had physical difficulties and 33-year-old Mr Lesedi, who had also suffered at the hands of the IFP, had some mild impairment on his right hand, which he could no longer fully use in his painting and decoration activities. These physical disabilities hampered the survivors' ability to cope with the distress of the psychological trauma that they were trying so hard, as men, to play down.

***Bereavement, loss, mourning and grief***

By virtue of the experiences they had been through – deaths, injuries, loss, pain and sadness – many of the participants described periods of mourning and grief. For some the process took longer than others, and for many it had not ended. Mrs Moya said following her daughter's death at the hands of the IFP:

I still cannot attend funerals. I can't stop crying when a young person has died. I have altogether stopped attending funerals – especially of daughters. The pain is still too raw. It's difficult to explain – and sometimes I feel ashamed that I cannot control my emotions – so the best thing is to stop meeting in places where I am being reminded of my daughter's death.

She was crying as she was relating this. When asked if she had received professional help, she said that she had, but only for a brief period because the counsellor left. She said she regularly attends Khulumani meetings where a space has been created to share with other bereaved parents, mainly mothers, and this exchange normally provides some brief respite.

For some bereaved parents the journey was still too long to undertake. Psychological wounds remained only partly closed and their emotions were still raw. This was evident from their accounts, even though provided to me about 14 years after giving testimony to the TRC. My reflexive journal stated:

Listening to these experiences, told as if they have just happened, made me wonder how long the effects were going to continue. I am touched and affected by just listening as I'm hearing most of them first hand. The experience of

reliving these memories as if they have just happened, probably demonstrated how profound they were. With all the support from Khulumani and probably other relevant services one would expect a shift to have taken place, but then it depends on what kind of support has been provided and what else has been missed and slipped through the net.

Mourning and grief do not appear to have received much attention, perhaps because, as mentioned before, Khulumani members are averse to their experiences being ascribed to psychological distress. However, this has been identified as a major theme in these interviews and will therefore be explored further in Chapter 5 and also the Discussion in Chapter 6.

### ***Sense of despair/powerlessness***

Being unable to see a way out of these situations, most participants expressed a sense of despair, hopelessness and powerlessness, not so much for themselves, but for the sake of their children and grandchildren. Mrs Matola, whose daughter was killed and who lost her husband a few months later from a stress-related stroke, said:

I'm feeling really unwell – in my head – in my body. I have heart problems and I keep on falling a lot. I believe this is caused by me being dizzy a lot, especially when I walk outside for some distance. I will just fall – I suppose my legs are no longer strong enough to support my body but I have arthritis which might explain the falling. Anyway I'm doing what I'm doing at the moment not for me – when my daughter died she left a child, a daughter who has now become my responsibility. Unfortunately as things go she also fell pregnant at 18 – had twins. I should have been happy to be first a grandmother and later a great grandma but I'm sorry to say this, I'm not.

Whilst Mrs Matola was concerned about the immediate financial situation for her grand- and great-grandchildren, other participants seemed to be asking for help with securing homes that had previously been destroyed as part of the political unrest. All were grieving for physical space – homes they had lost during the carnage.

A sense of despair and grief appeared to be lingering continuously. Mrs Moya talked about her daughter's death as if it was yesterday and Mrs Matola expressed being occupied by worries of her granddaughter, who reminds her of her own deceased daughter, and the fact that her granddaughter is growing up without a mother.

With most participants, especially women, the grief was explained in the form of physical ailments. All were coughing incessantly in the interviews and confirmed suffering from heart conditions. The men, on the other hand, complained of nightmares, disturbed sleeping patterns and sweating at night. Loss and grief also featured amongst mothers whose children or husbands had disappeared without a trace, as in the cases of Mrs Tumelo and Mrs Tshepo. Grief has emerged as a major theme and will be explored further in Chapter 6.

### ***Mistrust/lack of community spirit***

Participants in Sebokeng reported that the tensions caused by the IFP's murderous activities caused so much mistrust amongst the community that even tradition was not observed. For instance, the IFP prevented anybody visiting a bereaved family to offer condolences after they had killed someone in that family. This was totally against African values. Mrs Mangena, whose neighbour was killed by the IFP because she offered her condolences to Mrs Mangena when her husband was murdered, said: 'when I got back I was told that my neighbour had been killed by the IFP. I understand that she had been set alight and left to burn to death in order to set an example – what kind of people do this to others. Haven't they got a God?' Asked how she felt about this whole episode, she said: 'I still feel numb as if it happened today – now. It is haunting me as if I am – was – responsible for her death. I suppose I was in a way – anyway that's how it looks like to some people.'

*Researcher:* how do you deal or have you dealt with all those feelings?

*Mrs Mangena:* I talk a lot about this in meetings with Khulumani. I get relief temporarily. Once I'm on my own everything floods back to me. I have told myself that I can never completely erase the memories – will just have to live with it – that's my yoke. The bible says man proposes, God disposes.

Sometimes when people do not have an alternative outlet to their misery, they turn to God for support. It seems that when everything else has failed, the church and God are sources of comfort and solace for vulnerable, traumatised people.

Mrs Landela, whose son disappeared from school but was later found dead in a police van, said this about community spirit:

My son who was attending a school for the deaf and dumb disappeared for a whole week without trace. I was in such a state that I could not eat or sleep. Nobody seemed to know and wanted to help. I was searching on my own as people were afraid to be seen to be associating with me – because IFP was stopping people from even talking to one another, especially where there was trouble.

*Researcher:* how did it make you feel when you sensed that there was this kind of feeling in the community?

*Mrs Landela:* I was shocked initially and later distressed. Everybody seemed to know in the community what had happened to my son except myself because no one had the guts to tell me. I was left to discover his dead body in the most horrific way – his legs hanging outside an army truck. How cruel. Even the local councillor who was trying to help me search was threatened by these people.

Mrs Landela was concerned about her community losing its own values. In the African tradition, people are not left to mourn on their own. They have families, friends and communities supporting during this difficult time. Participants confessed to what they thought they understood the apartheid system was doing – that as a result of their own fears, i.e. the apartheid's fears of the invasion by the communist and of black people in general), they had to deal with this by projecting these feelings on to another group (the IFP), which appeared vulnerable and could easily be influenced. Due to the IFP's vulnerable position, it was easy for the NP to exploit that vulnerability and instil fear in its members.

### ***Erosion of values and traditions/lack of Ubuntu***

Participants expressed concerns about how their values and traditions had been eroded during these wars. Apart from the lack of support in burials/funerals mentioned above, many believed that this period heralded the end of African philosophy as they had known it. Mrs Landela captured this mood:

Children are now running communities, controlling the streets and lacking respect for elders. Decisions about who is in charge is no longer the preserve of wise old men and women of the community but ill-advised and ill-equipped youngsters who have barely started talking properly or are barely out of their nappies. They called themselves comrades – some of them are still just 10, 11 or 12-year-olds. What advice can one get from these babies? Frankly I blame the government – it's lost control.

Some participants clearly believed that the idea of Ubuntu no longer had a place in these periods of mayhem. Many made reference to 'black on black' violence. I asked a few participants about their understanding of this (mis)conception and am not certain if I received a satisfactory explanation. They all explained it in very simple terms – that is, as violence by blacks on blacks.

I tried to explore a little bit more with Mr Mathatha and said to him that IFP members are Zulus who targeted ANC members who just happened to be blacks. If white ANC members had been in the same space, they would have been targeted as well, and he agreed. So, we agreed that it was a matter of space and politics and not necessarily colour. He said emphatically: 'Yes, I agree. My father is Zulu and we are basically Zulus in my family but my father had to run away, leaving us on our own as he feared for his life.' However, having said that, his father was also one of the local councillors who, during that period of turmoil, were then targeted as supporters of a repressive state. In this there were multiple identities, and personal and political acts of violence in which it became impossible to know whom to blame or whom to trust. Loss of community values and trust may have had particularly devastating consequences for people experiencing such personal losses and anxieties.



### **4.3.6 Loss of hope**

Many participants described their experiences, as recounted above, as leading to a profound loss of hope. In particular, 6 and 7 December 1993 were mentioned by many of the participants as a critical period of turmoil in their lives, the 'summer of violence and discontent'. No one was spared the horror of the violence that touched so many families. Mr Lesedi said this about this period:

Whilst these wars were being waged, with the Boers [government] on one side and the IFP on the other and the ANC in the middle, we were asking 'where do we turn to? ... with two strong oppositions on either side, there was no chance for us to win. We might just as well give up.

According to some ANC participants, with the apartheid system and its sophisticated weapons, on one hand, and the IFP being armed by this strong machinery, on the other, their organisation stood no chance, especially after the collapse of communism.

Mr Mathatha conveyed a sense of hopelessness about his physical condition, having lost the use of one of his legs, his hearing being badly affected by the violence perpetrated on him, and having contracted HIV/AIDS. He felt his chances of being independent had been lost. The situation seemed to have left him mourning for lost objects; whether this is on-going loss of hope or a more short-term melancholic state will be discussed at length in Chapter 6. The next section touches briefly on hopes raised by the creation of the TRC.

### **4.3.7 Creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1994–8)**

The South African TRC was created under the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995) to investigate human rights violation committed during the apartheid era, as described in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

Before giving testimony, most participants said they did not know what the TRC was, but almost all said it made some fundamental promises. Whilst some heard about it via the media, particularly radio and television, others learned about it by word of

mouth. But most participants, by virtue of being members of Khulumani, got to know about it through this organisation. Mr Lesedi said this about the TRC:

I was told about the TRC by a woman called Ms MJ who lives at No. 4 at the next section, near the police station. She had heard about it from a neighbour – she herself had no idea what it entailed, only that all those who were injured during the conflict should report to the local municipality office.

Not everyone was initially confident that they would be able to give testimony in person. For example, Mrs Matola explained:

The person who told me about the TRC was Mrs JS, one of the TRC commissioners. In one of the meetings she explained to us what the TRC was about and how it was going to help us. But she also warned that the TRC might not be able to see everyone. To be able to tell your story to the TRC will depend on your statement. Because I was told that my statement was profound I was one of those chosen to go and tell her story at the TRC meeting. This was held in a nearby college hall ...

Others also realised that many people were going to be excluded. Not everybody fell within the narrow definition of ‘gross human rights violations’ as defined by the Act – something I found extraordinary. If the TRC was not mandated to include apartheid’s day-to-day inhumanities, it would be dealing with a very small sample of victims/survivors of human rights violations.

Most participants described receiving little preparation for giving testimony. For example, Mrs Mangena, whose son and husband were killed by the IFP during the ‘Bafana Bafana’ football match, said:

OK, what happened with me when I got in touch with the TRC, I did not hear about it from anyone but heard about it in the news – from the radio. It said all those people – victims of violence – were called to attend and go and write down statements to the TRC. At the time they had offices at the ABSA building

in Jeppe and Von Willig streets in Johannesburg. I went straight to these offices and sat next to an officer who asked me questions – I must admit I was not prepared for this.

*Researcher:* What were you not prepared for?

*Mrs Mangena:* For all the details they asked of me.

*Researcher:* What were they?

*Mrs Mangena:* To relate the story of how my husband and son died, to recall the details, dates and so on ...

*Researcher:* How did it make you feel relating those details?

*Mrs Mangena:* I felt distressed. I was not prepared. I was put off.

This highlighted how important it was for survivors to be prepared for the process that would be involved in a presentation to the TRC. Mrs Mangena only went to the identified offices to have her statement written down, but she already felt pressurised by the whole experience.

Even though most participants did not know much about the TRC, they expressed new optimism about what they thought it could provide. Most prepared in different ways to share their stories with the world. Some were helped by their organisations, mostly NGOs, to prepare statements, others by neighbours, and still others had not made any preparations whatsoever. Nonetheless, participants recalled there was this new hope that at last something positive was going to come out of this engagement. However, the problem with this new optimism was that most participants tended to confuse the TRC with the new government. There was no demarcation as to what responsibility the government had compared to what the TRC was able to provide.

The trauma that Mrs Landela experienced when her son was abducted and later found in a military van propelled her to hope that the TRC had the power to release her from her misery, symbolically and otherwise. She said: 'The TRC promised to build me a

house as I was currently living in a squatter camp – and it would educate my remaining children and provide adequate health care ...’

This was the kind of response I received from participants when they were asked about the promises made by the TRC. However, it turned out that the TRC’s mandate was limited, in terms of what it could reasonably provide for victims/survivors. The most it could do was to provide symbolic reparations in the form of the recovery of disappeared victims, exhumations and very limited monetary compensation.

***The promise to recover truth and the disappeared bodies/mysterious deaths***

Apart from the broad promises that participants reported having been made by the TRC, the latter also set itself to recover the truth about atrocities committed during the apartheid era. Truth commissions are best suited for establishing what is called ‘macro-truth’, which involves assessing contexts and patterns of human rights abuses with a view to identifying structural causes and intellectual authors of political violence (Chapman & Ball, 2001; cited in Leebaw, 2009: 1). Initially, survivors wished to know what fate befell their loved ones and where they could be traced (i.e. more akin to a ‘micro-truth’), but later it appeared as if participants’ psycho-social needs increased and diversified. Mrs Tshepo, when asked what motivated her to share her story, said:

I have been searching and searching for many years for my son’s body but to no avail. When the TRC came it promised to help me search and eventually apprehend the people who killed my son. I would be glad to know what they have done with him. I need to bury his body in dignity and with respect.

Mrs Tumelo said:

I have been living in darkness since my husband disappeared and when I heard from Khulumani that there was going to be this system that will help survivors to trace their loved ones I got really excited. For a moment my hopes were restored because at least even if my husband is found dead, I can now start preparing for a decent burial rather than sitting here still wondering. Closure is needed and until then no healing will take place.

This seemed to encapsulate the whole purpose of the TRC. Mrs Tumelo was very clear about what she expected from the TRC or any organisation with which she had dealings. She was articulate and confident, and spoke with pride in her own language; I found it a pleasure to listen to her express herself.

Following the help participants received with preparing for writing and producing statements to the TRC, other promises were made which may have changed the initial motivation with which survivors went to the TRC. For instance, survivors were promised reparations and rehabilitation, including monetary reparations.

This section briefly mentions how participants expressed their need to know where and how they could be assisted by the TRC to locate their disappeared loved ones. Participants reported that they were not surprised at the operations of the apartheid machinery, that critics of the system were abducted, arrested, tortured and sometimes recruited to spy for the government, and if not, were murdered and their bodies disposed of. These activities were extended to ANC members as young as 10, 12 and 14 years old. Mrs Tshepo said:

After a long, painful and strenuous searching, my older son who has been helping to piece things together about his brother's disappearance, with the help of Khulumani, one day came back home excited because he found an article in one of the newspapers at the local library reporting on the abduction and death of his brother and the two ANC youths.

She said that for her and her family, at that moment, there was at least a sense of relief that they now had knowledge about what had happened to him, even though hearing about his death was not a consolation. The next thing was to wait and hope that the TRC would help locate his body so that it could be properly buried.

Participants reported that when they were informed about the TRC and its roles, they were assured that, in the case of disappeared victims, the TRC would recover bodies and resolve the issue of mysterious deaths. The TRC was going to do this by encouraging (or even obliging via subpoena) perpetrators, who applied for amnesty, to

disclose how and where their loved ones were abducted, taken, tortured and disposed of.

Mrs Tumelo quoted how a representative of the TRC explained its role: 'We have investigators who will try their utmost best to help search for your husband's body until we find it.' She said that for her this was the beginning of hope, as she was already being assisted by a solicitor who was helping her to recover her husband's moneys from his employers, who had accused him of stealing from the company. She felt relieved that this had happened at the time of the handover to a new government, as prior to the political negotiations of 1995, his white employers would not even have considered paying him his dues.

It is important to mention that, by the time the TRC became involved in helping to search for the 'disappeared', most participants reported having tried to trace their loved ones themselves. This was because no other institutions were prepared or willing to assist, including police stations, which were required to investigate disappearances in accordance with their normal day-to-day duties. Most participants went to hospitals, police stations and even mortuaries to locate their missing relatives, but all to no avail. In a sense, the TRC was the last resort.

#### **4.3.8 Khulumani support group**

All the participants in my study were recruited from the Khulumani support group, in both Gauteng and the Western Cape. Participants attributed their knowledge of the TRC to Khulumani, and said that it was the group's support that enabled them to make submissions to the TRC.

##### ***Encouragement to share stories/help with statement taking***

Khulumani took responsibility for encouraging survivors to submit and prepare to share their stories with the world. Initially, together with other NGOs, Khulumani collaborated with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in documenting the potential cases of human rights violations which would be used by the TRC when it started its work, as well as training and running programmes that would help prepare victims/survivors to be able to share their stories. Khulumani staff were in

turn trained to provide emotional and practical support, prior to and after testimony, to all those victims chosen to present before the TRC. Mrs Matola said:

It was JS from Khulumani who came to inform and help me write the statement. I believe she was sent to encourage us not to be scared when telling our stories. She and others were called 'our helpers'. When we arrived we were called to go in front and talk – so when you approach something and have been prepared you talk with confidence. That's what we were encouraged to do – talk without fear – tell everything in front of all those people. As you'll be on your own it is important not feel scared.

Mrs Malema said:

At this point I felt relieved after my statement was written. I felt that at last something constructive is going to happen. I have been waiting for too long for this moment. The chance to tell my story will hopefully be the end of my torture. There's been a lot of speculation – now hopefully the truth will come out.

Whilst the taking of statements was difficult for some participants, as they were reminded of the painful past, for others it heralded the beginning of hope.

### ***Help applying for reparations***

A range of recommendations were made by the TRC with regard to reparations and rehabilitation, including symbolic and broad-based programmes (Hamber, 2009: 31). Most participants reported that Khulumani and other available NGOs said that they would help them apply for reparations. It should be noted that, under its mandate, the TRC could only recommend but not actually provide for reparations and rehabilitation. It was the task of the government, on receipt of the TRC's report, to issue reparations accordingly. Only those who told their stories in front of the TRC's panel were entitled to reparations.

Most participants disclosed that organisations that contacted them said they would help them apply for reparations, both symbolic and financial. Mrs Moya, who reported having forgotten a lot of details about the whole TRC process, was quite clear in response to my question: 'What happened after your statement was taken?' She replied: 'They said I will be given £30,000 compensation money.' When I asked: 'Is that what you expected and are you happy with that amount?', she replied: 'Yes, I needed the money. More would be good but if this is all that's been offered I would not say no.'

Some participants were quoted much higher figures, which were reduced to the amount mentioned by Mrs Moya above. Following the promise of monetary reparations, it appears that there was a shift from wishing to know the truth and recover dead bodies for proper burials, to the attraction of money, which became very important for most participants. Mr Mathatha said:

They said we'll all get £100,000 over 6 years, especially myself as I've been so badly injured on my legs. They promised that I will get regular physiotherapy. They asked me if I had children and when I said yes, one, then they said he will be given appropriate education and when they asked if I had a house and when I said no I was still living at home with my mother, they said they will provide me with housing.

Mrs Zwane said: 'We were told that the TRC will provide free education for our children, it will provide us with free health care and it will build houses for us.'

This was echoed by a few other participants. The question about money came later, whether or not participants had been told the truth about their loss. To be able to bury the dead and recover damaged possessions and property needs money and this became a preoccupation with victims/survivors. This was the reality of their lives, as poor people with few resources. The promises made of compensation, either symbolic or monetary, became a subcategory under a major theme called 'promises made by the ANC and the TRC'. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.



#### 4.3.9 Restoration of some hope

Most participants reported that the coming into existence of the TRC felt like a huge burden being lifted from their shoulders. They did not know how much to expect, but they were very optimistic.

##### ***Families wish to know the truth/bury the dead with dignity***

Initially, most participants just needed to know the truth, especially those whose loved ones had mysteriously disappeared and had not been located. In order for them to truly mourn, they had to know what had happened.

Mrs Tshepo said she was still waiting to hear the truth about her son's body. She did not believe the perpetrators in court saying that he had been shot and the body burned to ashes. She said they were lying. She needed to see evidence of her son's remains before she could believe that her son was no longer in this world. Whilst reflecting, I thought that it was not unreasonable of her to expect to see the evidence. I understand that bones remain intact after the flesh has decomposed, which is why archaeologists are able to trace the origins of humans after many years. However, in this case the bones had been burned to ashes. I wondered if the judge had asked the men what they did with the ashes. My reflexive journal explores this further:

13/05/10. Mrs Tshepo has been told conflicting stories about her son's disappearance. One (probably rumour) is that he has been murdered and thrown into the crocodile river where he was devoured by crocodiles, the other which is official. These two strands of information have been going on and lying side by side for such a long time that the whole experience has become part of her life. These two conflicting stories have become embedded in her psyche so that she's unable to distinguish the difference between the two. She's stuck in her melancholy and probably to dislodge her from that might actually destabilise her further.

Participants had differing motivations for presenting their stories. For families whose loved ones have disappeared and who have not had the chance to achieve closure by burying them, the struggle continues. For all those who were fortunate

enough to be reconnected with their dead, part closure has occurred as decent burials have taken place. Mrs Malema said:

Even though it was traumatic to watch my son's body being dug out of a grave where he was buried with about five or six others, the help offered by pathologists and all the other people who accompanied me, helped me to accept my fortune at having being able to identify his body which was exhumed for a proper and decent burial. I could now lie in peace that I have done my duties. This has been a great relief for me.

#### **4.3.10 Summary of Gauteng findings**

Section 4.3 has presented findings from the Gauteng areas, exploring the experiences that motivated participants to give testimony to the TRC. The key finding is the impact that constant violence can have on the functioning of individuals, groups and communities, particularly a profound loss of hope and control.

Central to this is how loss of control and powerlessness can erode people's values, traditions and sense of selves. This can also lead to communities becoming suspicious of one another, thereby creating a cycle of violence. Hence 'black on black' violence appeared to have dominated this discourse.

Section 4.4 will deal with experiences from participants in the Western Cape, which were significantly different from those in Gauteng. Most of the Western Cape atrocities were the result of the discriminatory, unequal and brutal policies of apartheid, and gave rise to somewhat different motives for giving testimony.

### **4.4 Findings from the Western Cape Province**

In this section I will present the analysis of the experiences of participants in the Western Cape that led them to give testimony to the TRC. Six themes, each with its own categories, were identified using the grounded theory process described in Chapter 3. It will become clear, as I explain these themes, that the same questions from the semi-structured interviews elicited different issues for participants from the two provinces.

My foreknowledge of the situation in SA helped me to distinguish and relate to these differences.

As in the Gauteng model of the core experiences that led participants to give testimony to the TRC, each theme and related categories will be presented in turn and supported by relevant quotes. In the Gauteng region the themes have been narrated sequentially to allow the reader to follow the story chronologically, and I shall do the same in the Western Cape. The first theme that emerged following the interviews is forced removals, with its subcategories of police harassment, Pass Laws and excessive use of power. The latter has its own subthemes involving detentions, torture and bails. The second major theme is loss of jobs, possessions and homes, treated as one. Further categories under this theme are poverty, pain, misery, unhappiness and rootlessness. The third theme is family dislocation and lawlessness, within which are subthemes such as loss of respect for elders and loss of cultural traditions. The fourth major theme is powerlessness; the fifth is concerned with feelings of being stuck; and the sixth is hope for change following the creation of the TRC and the presence of Khulumani to offer support. As participants became aware that there would be a TRC through which they could share their stories and be acknowledged and validated, subthemes such as families' hopes for reunion with lost others, restoration of law and a chance for a better quality of life came up as further issues to be explored.

#### **4.4.1 Forced removals**

I shall return briefly to the background of the policy of forced removals in apartheid South Africa before turning to the participants' accounts. (Please see Chapter 1 for more details).

Applying the apartheid policy of forced removals, enshrined in the Population Registration Act (1950), which classified people by race, the South African government transferred large numbers of coloured people, Indians and Africans from the land that they had previously occupied, to new segregated satellite townships. Although the government claimed that these removals were voluntary, participants claimed that the government used force against victims who resisted. They reported that families were woken up either in the middle of the night or in the early hours of the morning, with

police bringing huge trucks to bulldoze their houses and damage whatever possessions they had. Most participants experienced and expressed this government policy as unfair, inhuman and distressing, as it denied them the ability to make permanent homes for their families. In the process, participants reported lives being lost. Older participants still remembered the brutality of the system. Ms Lerato recalled these difficult times clearly: 'It was really horrific, to wake by helicopters circling the air, sirens and sounds of bullets being fired outside.'

Whilst she was reliving these moments, I could not help seeing Mrs Lerato's eyes filling up with mist as if she was about cry. I realised then that it must have been difficult to bring back all those memories, even though they happened years ago.

The subcategories associated with this theme will be presented in turn and supported by extracts from the interviews. These subcategories are police harassment and Pass Laws, with the latter divided further into excessive and abusive exercise of power, bails, detentions and torture. These categories tend to overlap as the events being described occurred at more or less the same time.

### ***Police harassment***

Most participants expressed horror at the manner in which they were exposed to constant harassment by the authorities. Most said that this treatment was demeaning and often resulted in physical, emotional and psychological abuse. They said that these actions had caused much heartache for them. Here is a dialogue with Mr Motsomotso:

*Mr Motsomotso:* ' Hey man, we suffered and suffered since 1983 – with unrests and fighting escalating. I broke an arm whilst trying to run away from the police.

*Researcher:* Why were you running away?

*Mr Motsomotso:* Because our houses were burning.

*Researcher:* Who was burning your houses?

*Mr Motsomotso:* It was the council, of course. They were sent by the Boers to move us out of the area.

Mr Motsomotso was in his early eighties when interviewed for this study, and at the time of the forced removals (1983) would have been in his sixties. He said the humiliation of being chased around like a small boy had a disempowering effect on him and others of his age. Most participants said they could not imagine more demeaning treatment than that to which they had been exposed by white police officers, most of whom were very young. Mrs Lerato also spoke of this harassment:

Again in 1966 I went to work as usual then I heard that KDC was burning down. 'The Boers are at it again,' they said. I didn't waste time and when I arrived I found mayhem – the place was burning down. There was smoke everywhere and the police were shooting everywhere, at anything and anybody. Whilst the properties were burning down the police continued to shoot at anything that was moving. We were running in all different directions.

Even though participants knew that it was the government's policy to relocate them, the destruction of their property and possessions seemed irresponsible and uncaring. In addition, the insult was felt more acutely because the council officials were black people. Participants expected some kind of understanding that people could not and should not be jostled around like that as if there had no rights. They could understand why the government was doing it, as their view of black people was negative anyway, but they felt that blacks in these positions should have had more sympathy as they were all in the same situation. It seemed that the black councillors were themselves obeying the laws of the apartheid system, no matter how discriminatory. It was a no-win situation for all of them, as if the councillors had not enforced the policy, they would have been sacked from their jobs. Nevertheless, it appears that the participants felt more dehumanised by their black counterparts than by the whites. Mr Vukile captured this mood as follows: 'Yes we know what white people think about us and how they treat us but our brothers are letting us down. They will denounce their own and spy on them just for the case of having a job.'

Despite the fact that participants knew that black officers were 'just doing their jobs', they could not understand why black officers allowed themselves to be used by

white officers to apply the apartheid laws. Worse still, they could not reconcile themselves to the fact that black police officers were instrumental in killing other blacks. For example, Mr Vukile expressed a refusal to understand and accept the rationale for his fellow blacks doing the functions that they were being paid for. He reasoned that in political situations people should be united in the struggle and some blacks had compromised the struggle.

Participants had various ways of explaining these events. Whilst some said they felt horrified, others said they felt sick, and still others said they felt scared and then angry. Almost 20 years after the events, Mr Memela suggested a different reason for the police harassment:

My trauma started when I came to live in KDC in 1983. I lived there from 1983 to 1986. In 1986 there was 'black on black violence' and this started in Cross Roads. The police were informed of the ANC cadres seeking refuge in Cross Roads. Now, we believe that there were 'mpipis' [spies] that informed the police of such an activity. The police did not waste any time, they came rushing in with guns and shamboks, searching everywhere and in the processes beating people up with shamboks and shooting randomly. The communities were scattered in all directions. It was like they had gone mad.

Participants explained that the treatment meted out to people who had not committed any crime – except the apartheid 'crime' of belonging to a different colour – appeared quite catastrophic and unnecessarily excessive. Some participants said that the callousness with which authorities viewed them implied that they must be subhuman. The brutality that accompanied the forced removals highlighted the fact that the National Party generally regarded black people as second-class citizens who existed only for the purposes of serving the white minority. From the action of the authorities it seemed that blacks were inferior, almost lower than animals.

One of the problems arising from the policy of forcibly removing people from their homes was that they were moved to places with which they had no connection, or to places where there were no opportunities for people to advance themselves. Mr Motsomotso related this scenario:

They didn't care where they dropped you off – just anywhere, far away from your hometown, in the veld, no houses, nothing, and nothing to start building your shack. However, as you know people will always find ways to survive. Within no time either people ignored the law and returned to where they were picked up from or started erecting plastic or corrugated makeshift houses and so it goes.

Mr Morena, an ANC activist at the time, commented thus:

One day in the early hours of the morning we found ourselves surrounded by an army of armed police and a pack of dogs. We were bundled into big vans that we nicknamed 'umqomo' [big bins]. It was travelling with us all over. The officer in charge said if we wanted to relieve ourselves we could do it anywhere, even where we were sitting. We had no idea where we were being taken ...

I was reminded of the slave journey from Central Africa to the Americas when I heard his story, and reflected on this in my journal:

24/06/10. 'Bundling' people of all ages, including women and children, in a big van and not telling them where they were heading to sounds quite frightening. For most participants it was obvious that this journey will end in one of the places defined by the government as 'homelands'. That is either the Transkei or Ciskei. However most had no connections with these places and if they did these places were barren and devoid of 'life and soul'. For young people especially, living in these conditions meant to be consigned to a life with no purpose and this is mainly what I was hearing from the participants.

It was not surprising how the apartheid authorities bundled people into vans, shunting them off to areas where no one ever wanted to live. But to bundle human beings into a 'big bin' as described by Mr Morena invoked ideas of people being treated

like rubbish. One can understand participants feeling that they had been treated like dirt and that consequently this had a negative impact on their dignity and self-worth.

It is not possible in this document to report the detail of all the treatments meted out to victims/survivors of human rights violations, but I hope the few extracts I have included capture the level and intensity of the trauma that victims experienced.

### ***Pass Laws and their consequences***

Pass Laws and all the other Acts mentioned in this category were rigid and sophisticated measures used by the apartheid government to wield control over black South Africans. Geographical space was used to demarcate who could and could not belong in those areas (e.g. work, sleep or pass through them). A pass is a legal document used by the apartheid regime to control the movements of black people and to prevent them from moving out of their 'zoned-in townships' into white areas. The Pass Laws allowed excessive use of power, leading to unlawful and sometimes indefinite detention and torture in prisons.

The majority of participants reported having been arrested on a number of occasions for failing to produce a passbook on demand. Mrs Lerato said:

So as we struggled because of the Boer laws, I was always arrested under these laws. However, sometimes I'd hide and evade arrest but if I was arrested I'd spend some time in prison – about a week or two. Sometimes I'd spend a longer period as my family would not be aware that I had been imprisoned. But eventually when they did get to know they would come and release me on bail.

She ascribed her physical ailments (i.e. heart problems, gall stones, diabetes, high blood pressure and a mild stroke episode) to the constant harassment she received at the hands of the apartheid officials, including repeated detentions. Mrs Lerato expressed frustration at the pointlessness of the authorities' actions, including detention after detention in cells where conditions were unhealthy and horrible. Participants were dehumanised by the poor conditions they were held in. They also said they worried about their families, their children and their possessions. As Mrs Lerato indicated above, bail money was an issue. Sometimes the only reason why people stayed longer in prison



was because families could not accumulate enough money to meet the bail demands, as recounted by Mrs Mabena:

Mrs Mabena said: 'I was arrested on Roland Street for having failed to produce a pass on demand. I was then sent to Polsmoor prison where I was tortured.'

*Researcher:* How were you tortured?

*Mrs Mabena:* I was constantly beaten up and I ended up with a dislocated arm.

*Researcher:* You were tortured like that just for failing to produce a pass? [sounding incredulous]

*Mrs Mabena:* They also kept on demanding me to tell the truth.

*Researcher:* How were you supposed to tell the truth?

*Mrs Mabena:* You see I am an ANC member. I'm with the women's league, so they thought I and other women in the league knew where some of the comrades/cadres were hiding.

Most perpetrators reported that, whilst they were arrested for failing to produce passes, the authorities' motives were to investigate the political activists and opponents of the apartheid laws. Participants reported there was suspicion amongst the police force that cadres who had returned from exile were hiding amongst their communities, and that their presence was poisoning the minds especially of young people. Mr Memela explained:

The problem started when the police officers discovered that ANC cadres were hiding in KDC. Even though the forced removal programme was in progress and had its toll of people's daily lives, police were equally interested in catching what they called trouble makers or what could be described as a threat to their white supremacist ideal.

The Pass Laws were not only a challenging dilemma for the participants to deal with, but also a matter of survival according to most participants. Remaining in the 'gutter' was not an option for them, so most broke the law and moved over to urban areas to seek jobs. This created high levels of stress amongst the majority of people of working age. Simultaneously having no control of their future was a very debilitating experience, to the extent that some people wondered whether life was worthwhile. Some participants reported withdrawing into themselves, whilst others tended to express these tensions in other ways. Mr Morena commented: 'When people, especially young men, haven't got an outlet, what they do is get involved in organised crime – then the police will have a reason to harass people. Right now the police have no business to be harassing innocent people'. This was a powerful comment, as what had been happening in apartheid SA was considered enough to turn anybody and everybody into criminals.

***'Like a ping pong': feeling subject to excessive use of power***

Participants voiced their anger at how excessively police used their powers. Apart from being arrested for failing to produce their pass book, they often found themselves detained indefinitely without being charged, or if charged, being unable to pay bail money, and risking being kept even longer under highly unsatisfactory prison conditions. Ms Mabena said:

They asked me to produce a pass and I told them I did not have it. Then they threatened to detain me further. First they said it will be for two months and then it was extended to 6 months. My family had to do something quickly to organise a pass book for me. When it eventually came it had a different surname.

Asked if this helped to release her, she said it did because the family used her maiden name instead of her married one, even though by that time she was divorced. Ms Mabena said she believed that because the pass book contained her Afrikaans name, this helped to get her released.

I reflected on this change of tactics on the part of the government officials in my journal.

21/06/10. This is very really interesting that the laws of the country were applied so differently to different groups of people in South Africa. Whilst coloured and Indian people were subject to discriminatory laws of the country as much as the blacks, within the same laws treatment meted to different groups was dissimilar, i.e. coloured people treated differently to blacks and Indians treated a little bit better than coloureds and blacks. For instance just by changing her name to a more acceptable one, i.e. an Afrikaner name, changed the attitude of the officers dealing with the matter, who treated Mrs Mabena in a conciliatory manner. Even with the defence put forward by the apartheid government that it did know what was happening in the country, in terms of atrocities perpetrated by its counter-insurgency and other military officers, I cannot stop wondering if the NP government had full knowledge and/or sanctioned these atrocities. Was it just a few 'bad apples' in the government that tended to bend the rules a little to support their sadistic impulses?

Further explaining the cycle of misfortune created by passbooks, Mrs Lerato said:

Without a passbook, I was detained time and time and again. I was in prison like a ping pong [she laughed about it]. And every time I had to pay up to R300 or R500 for bail. This was really distressing as I had no income and couldn't hold down a job.

She said relatives and friends got together and contributed towards the bail payment, which led to her release. However, for the victim it was very distressing to have to get friends and family members to pay up money that sometimes they hardly had, considering the problems they were constantly faced with in seeking and failing to find or hold down jobs. Desperately wanting to be freed, but at the same time feeling like a burden to family members, was an 'approach-avoidance' dilemma that was clearly unfair and hugely demoralising.

#### 4.4.2 Loss of jobs/possessions/homes

Following their experiences of continual harassment and detentions, participants explained the consequences of these actions by the government. Most reported that, due to their inability to hold down jobs, most lost not only their possessions and homes but also their loved ones. Mrs Zolani explained:

*Mrs Zolani:* My pain started in 1983, 10th April, when we were asleep a loud speaker was making announcements. When we went outside to check what was being said, we saw some men, half naked, already outside looking confused. There were also Boers milling about. It was early in the morning – round about 8.00 a.m.

*Researcher:* So what was being announced?

*Mrs Zolani:* They said the whole area was burning down. In the commotion, all of a sudden and out of the blue someone came over and said to me that my husband has been shot.

Mrs Zolani started crying and I had to stop, pause the tape and provide assurance. She was overwhelmed with emotion on recalling the incident. She then recalled that, following this incident, family and friends came together and helped her to gather her children, then aged 13, 7 and 3, who went to stay with other relatives in Zwelisha, in another part of the Eastern Cape. She claimed that it was devastating for her to be separated from her children. Although the situation was out of her control, she felt responsible for the fact that she could not keep her children with her and this made her feel really powerless.

Mrs Lerato made the following comments about the burning of homes: 'After the burning subsided my heart collapsed under my feet. I realised I was left with nothing – not a teaspoon, cutlery, pots and pans – nothing. Everything had been destroyed.'

Listening to Mrs Lerato's anger about her damaged possessions, I could not help relating to her feelings: 'my heart collapsed under my feet'. This is a woman who had

spent half her life in poverty, needing to work because she came from a poor background. Despite her 'ping pong' lifestyle, she had managed to amass some possessions over the years and for all that to be destroyed in a matter of hours must have been devastating. Because this experience had been so intense and had such a lasting effect on her, she could still remember it as if 'it was yesterday'. She said that for her to rebuild her life and start acquiring home goods again was still a constant struggle.

As regards where people were moved to after their homes were burned, some participants reported remaining to rebuild their shacks, even though they knew they would be relocated. In contrast, Mrs Mabena said:

I moved from Cross Roads to Philippe – from Philippe to KDC – just like that. I was circling around like that, being chased from one area to the other. At the end I took refuge with some Indian family in the town centre. This caused me a lot of physical and emotional problems. I've now got arthritis, high blood pressure and diabetes.

In a follow-up conversation with Mr Motsomotso about this constant moving, he said:

They didn't care. They wanted us to go anywhere as long as we moved out of where they said we should, i.e. out of their sight basically. It all started with the Seaside, then moved on to all those other areas and ended up with moving out residents of Cross Roads – and so it goes on and on.

It was hard to believe that the government would forcibly remove and uproot families from their homes and not provide an alternative. Under this infamous policy, people were moved into rural and arid areas where there was no infrastructure and no prospect of survival. Even if people wished to live off the soil, there was no chance of being self-sufficient. Uprooting people can be a traumatising experience. People lose a sense of self and a sense of community, and once people have no sense of identity, they feel powerless. They have nothing to hold on to for support. This is an antithesis to the ideals of 'Ubuntu' because, as people become dispersed, they lose the

interconnectedness that they had in the place from which they were uprooted, and this can cause a sense of dislocation with others.

The participants reported putting up some kind of resistance and in some cases a real fight, even though they could not match the sophistication of apartheid's weaponry. Mr Morena said: 'We were prepared to fight and were even ready for imprisonment. If they did not imprison us we would voluntarily give ourselves in. We were becoming used to this cyclical in and out of detention fiasco.'

Apart from the misery and hardship that these forced removals entailed, the issue of rootlessness became a real concern for most participants, most of whom were previously well-respected elders of their communities. Participants reported most families moving about aimlessly, looking for a safe haven. Whilst some sought refuge in churches, some charity organisations tried to provide spaces but experienced difficulties in providing for so many families. Participants reported that these issues brought related social problems such as child delinquency, lack of proper parental care/control and a lack of space to teach family/community values. Similar to Gauteng, in Western Cape some of these young people became political activists by default as political organisations such as the ANC provided a safe haven. In those organisations they found that they belonged and were recognised. These psycho-social consequences will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

My journal reflected this concern:

24/06/10. The dictionary definition of rootlessness describes a situation where there is no basis of stability or most importantly having no position in society. Having no home or space that's supposed to meet not only individuals' physical needs but also psychological and emotional needs, can result in significant social and cultural difficulties. For most men and especially Xhosa men, not being able to provide a home for their families means an erosion/loss of their masculinity at best and at worst destruction of their very essence of life, i.e. mores, social and cultural responsibilities and expectations, values and traditions.

Below I shall explore these themes further and provide extracts from participants regarding this notion of having lost control of what binds communities.

#### **4.4.3 Family disconnections and lawlessness**

Participants in the Western Cape expressed grave concerns about not having the power to deal with being moved out of their natural habitats to areas that they had no connections to whatsoever under the 'Homelands Acts'. This denied them not only the right to self-determination but also a chance to make decent living for themselves, which they regarded as a fundamental right of every person. This led to impoverished circumstances, socio-economic and cultural difficulties, and a form of lawlessness.

##### ***Loss of respect for elders***

According to participants' accounts, the policy of forced removals and related laws had a two-pronged effect on survivors: that is, at a personal level as well as at the societal level. Most participants reported that the government's dehumanising laws, which had demeaned the men by removing their families from the comfort of their homes to unknown territories, resulted in their children having less respect for them as parents. The children felt that their elders had lost control and were being controlled by a system they had come to abhor. At a societal level, participants reported having lost their positions as the elders of their communities. They perceived that none of their children had any respect for them, as they had no power to exert any more. Mr Morena lamented this situation as follows:

While we were traumatized and paralysed by all this confusion of being shunted from one to another in 1986, some 'elements' that were used by the government to spread that confusion amongst us, men like Mr JX and MM [members of the ANC] instructed the youth to shambok [whip] all the old people who were not supporting our cause after the progressive force was formed.

He said during the commotion, when everybody was on the run from beatings and in some cases shootings, the older men were the ones receiving the brunt of it, as they

were unable to run as fast as the young men. I felt very sorry for the older men in particular, as my reflexive journal shows:

23/06/10. There is a lot of greater responsibility placed on older people when communities are in trouble. Under normal circumstances, in African cultures older male citizens are the guidance that communities search for when people find themselves at cross roads. Their wisdom is really valued and appreciated by all. However, in an apartheid situation where black South Africans are treated with disdain and disrespect, it can be quite difficult for these men to exert some form of control and authority. On one hand young people criticise and accuse them of having failed to protect them and on the other it's the government failing to give them that power. This was evident and more reflected than ever when the school students in Soweto in 1976 took to the streets in defiance of the government's insistence on the medium of instruction being Afrikaans. I believe that the success or lack of these riots diminished young people's regard and value of the role played by elders in both communities and the struggle for emancipation.

Asked why and who instructed that the elders be shamboked, Mr Morena explained that it was because it was believed that they were working against the progressive force; they were called 'mpimpis', or 'informers'.

For communities it is a sad day when there is a rift between the young and the old, as the elder generations will be unable to pass their wisdom on to the younger generation. It does not take a clever person to know that a country or society that does not know its history is bound to repeat the mistakes of the past. Participants implied that colonialism had eroded a lot of Africa's history and distorted what remains. African history is essentially an oral history and if the elders cannot communicate with the young, a whole historical legacy is wiped out. No wonder that most participants refer to 'black on black' violence, because that is actually what is happening. The enemy is no longer the white man; the enemy is now perceived as within. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 6.



***'No tools to carry on living life as you know it': loss of cultural traditions***

Loss of respect and loss of traditions go hand in hand. Once communities lose their values and traditions, it follows that they will not be able to pass on valuable lessons to the next generation. Participants reported the powerlessness that the older generation felt following constant police harassment, perpetual loss of homes, long-standing socio-economic instability, misery and unhappiness. There was no time and energy to share and educate the younger generations on values and traditions that are so important in maintaining society's moral codes. Mr Memela captured this feeling as follows:

The situation was too complex. No one knew exactly what was what. However, some were aware that the Boers were behind this confusion. They were driving a wedge between the older activists and the comrades (mainly all young people in the locations). They told lies about the elders and vice versa.

Not only was this conflict going on between the generations, but participants reiterated the presence of 'black on black' violence. Most of the participants believed that there was a plan by the Boers to use blacks to spy on other blacks and to be instrumental in dispensing punishment on the government's behalf, when black people refused to move out to areas designated for them. This was reminiscent of the ANC/IFP conflicts in the Gauteng areas. The theme of 'black on black' violence was identified in the previous section and will be explored further in 6.

Mr Morena confirmed the presence of black people, recruited to join the white police officers and commit atrocities amongst their own people. These police officers were nicknamed 'Koevoet', and the other group, 'Witdoekes' (white scarfs). 'When they came out to harass and cause injuries to people, the blacks will arrive wearing white scarfs in order to hide their identities whilst whites will come out with black painted faces. Can you imagine the confusion?'

Mr Phakade, whose unborn child died whilst he and his wife were running away from tear gas that had been sprayed from a helicopter, said: 'In this crazy set-up, we did not know who was who – everybody was a suspect, they were all in masks.'

Participants often expressed confusion and dismay about the chaos surrounding forced removals, Pass Laws and indiscriminate arrests. They described the knowledge of black defectors as an additional betrayal. There was a sense of community fragmentation with some blacks seen to be fighting on the side of the very system that was oppressing them. Within these fractured communities, values and traditions were felt to be eroded.

#### **4.4.4 Powerlessness**

Most participants reported that, once their sense of themselves as a nation had been destroyed, they felt completely powerless. Mr Motsomotso summarised this feeling as: 'Once values and traditions are absent then you have no tools to carry on living life as you know it'.

#### **4.4.5 Feelings of being 'stuck'**

Before the establishment of the TRC, participants felt that they were stuck psychologically and socially because they had lost hope of ever redeeming the situation that had been imposed on them. They did not believe that the white government of the apartheid regime had any interest in taking them out their deprivation. They had experienced so many atrocities that they had lost count and many of these took place more or less simultaneously, such as the forced removals and Pass Laws. The experiences of being shunted around and being re-arrested overlapped and fed on one another. The forced removals and Pass Laws were the catalysts to everything that took place afterwards. Ms Sello commented on this accumulation of one problem after another:

What is there else that the Boers can't do? I've seen it all and not much has changed in their attitudes since they produced the Registration Act, the Land Act and the forced removal laws. Every time they can't handle a situation they come up with some ridiculous law – it's relentless.

Being 'stuck' was expressed by almost by all participants, especially the men, who had been very active in the struggle – a struggle which involved perpetual hardship, forced

removals and laws that restricted their movement. They believed that they were fighting battles but losing wars. Mr Morena said: 'You can't fight the war with sticks and stones and also cannot fight a psychological war without the correct tools.'

The issue of 'black on black' violence came up, which Mr Morena believed happened because human beings just want to be on the winning side. This, he said, despite the fact that he also believed that black people did not choose to be violent, but instead the violence was instilled in them by virtue of violence perpetrated against them. I believe that the notion of 'oppression begets oppression' was probably in his mind when he said this.

#### **4.4.6 Creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1985)**

Most participants reported experiencing a sense of new hope with the arrival of the TRC and the invitation to share their stories. Most heard about the TRC through various sources but mainly through the mass media of television and radio. Some heard through word-of-mouth informal networks, including Khulumani. Ms Mabena said:

I heard about the TRC from a woman called Ms Tembi. She was a member of Khulumani but she is dead now. You don't know how this woman struggled – her son was burnt to death after petrol was doused through her door and because he couldn't escape he burnt to death inside the house. Oh, you don't know how painful this was ...

Ms Sello said that the TRC was reported all over television and radio, and that victims/survivors were advised to contact the department of justice to have their cases reported and to arrange to submit statements to the TRC. Ms Lerato explained:

One day I was just sitting at home, thinking about all sorts of things, when a young girl came in and said that I should go to Nyanga to give statements about my struggles with the police. I went there to find some women from the TRC in

Johannesburg/Gauteng, who asked me to explain how my house and possessions got burnt and how I was assaulted by the police officers.

The TRC used various methods to advertise its existence and to encourage survivors to come forward and tell their stories. The extract above indicates how information was circulating amongst survivors themselves. This highlights the value of sharing information locally – when people share experiences of trauma and pain, they are bound to know one another better and transfer knowledge readily. I wondered if this informal communication network had been compromised when the conflict brought suspicion and violence into impoverished neighbourhoods. It seemed that in the Western Cape, everybody who lived in either townships or squatter camps was either a victim or a survivor, so the information was bound to get spread around quickly by word of mouth. This contrasts with the type of city life in Gauteng where people are busier with their own lives, rushing to and from work.

Most participants reported feeling really hopeful that there was going to be a chance for problems to be resolved through giving testimony. The motivations to submit testimonies seemed more clear-cut in the Western Cape than in Gauteng. Participants described looking forward to being offered reparations, monetary support for homes and possessions that were destroyed, or rehabilitation in the form of basic housing, health and education provision. Due to the nature of the hardships experienced, fewer were concerned about uncovering truth or recovering the bodies of deceased loved ones than in Gauteng. As a result, monetary reparations meant more in the Cape and this issue will be explored further in Chapters 5 and 6.

### ***The role of Khulumani***

Like the participants in Gauteng, the Khulumani support group played an enabling role for participants in the Western Cape. Having started prior to the TRC, the Khulumani support group remained one of the organisations in the country providing support and guidance about the work of the TRC, mainly to its own members.

Mrs Mabena said the only people who supported them throughout this process came from Khulumani:

Z is one of the organisers in Khulumani. She was always there for us. She'd even just pop in for a chat over a cup of coffee. She's the one who helped and prepared the statements for us and ensured that we were ready to present our stories to the TRC.

Khulumani, post-TRC, has remained active in these members' lives; many were encouraged to rethink their positions in terms of taking a more active role in the running of the group. The organisation is frequented by women more than men, although I was told that men are also becoming very interested in the relevance and importance of Khulumani. The organisation stands for the principles of joint action and the continuation of liberation struggles, and highlights the hopes that victims/survivors still had of moving forward.

Mr Motsomotso said: 'I will definitely start all over again to attend the meetings regularly. I think they are doing a good job – the struggle continues.' Like a few other members who had lost touch with Khulumani, Mr Motsomotso highlighted that Khulumani remains committed to ensuring that the needs of victims/survivors are paramount in the struggle for redress, and that it was important to have connections with such an organisation. As its name implies, it speaks out for the marginalised, the 'voiceless'.

***Raised hopes, opportunity for change and a redress of power***

I have combined these three topics as I think they are closely related; one influences the others. They are similar to the Gauteng experiences where participants described regaining hope from the promise that they would obtain the truth relating to disappeared bodies, the possibility of burying the dead, and monetary and symbolic compensation.

The year 1998 was crucial for participants as they prepared themselves to share their stories. Most participants in Western Cape reported that the statement takers explained why they were being encouraged to share their stories with the TRC and in front of perpetrators.

Mrs Zolani said she was asked what she wished the TRC to support her with, to which she replied that she wanted support to educate her children because their father

had died at the hands of the police state. She was satisfied that everything was written down and she was promised that her wish would be honoured.

Ms Lerato, in contrast, expressed hope for compensation: 'They promised to give me money – about £30,000 to cover the cost of all the possessions I lost.'

Mr Vukile said this about the promises made: 'The TRC said that it will provide us with housing, education for our children, and health services in exchange for our stories. All the services that the apartheid government failed to provide. I thought at last a chance for change is about to take place.' Whilst some participants' decisions to present testimony were motivated by money, especially where houses and possessions had been destroyed, most reported that they needed a new government that would provide basic public services, as Mr Vukile pointed out.

Mr Morena, reflecting on the current SA, said:

If apartheid listened to what Madiba [Mandela] suggested ages ago when he was still young, that the country belonged to all who lived in it and not let him languish in jail for all these years, this country would have been far advanced by now. All these untold sufferings, harassments and shoving people all over the place have done nothing but damage to the country.

Most participants felt at the time of giving testimony that the TRC had made promises for the better and that people's sense of belonging might be restored. This reflects the hope of restoration, following on from the theme of the loss of jobs, possessions and homes. People hoped not only for their lost possessions to be replaced, but for their sense of home and community to be restored.

***Hope for reunion with families, restoration of law and order, and better quality of life***

Although some families lost loved ones through death who clearly would never be replaced, some retained hopes that following the TRC they would eventually settle down to normal lives.

Ms Sello cried when she told me about how her husband was killed during the forced removals. At the time she was pregnant and she had to raise that child on her own. She said (crying): 'My daughter does not know her father and I had to struggle to

raise her on my own – she grew up without a father.’ When she spoke, she became inconsolable; I paused the tape and, with the help of community workers, attended to her emotional needs. She continued with the interview after this outpouring and said she felt better after having the opportunity to share her story.

I was left feeling concerned about this outburst and began to appreciate how the participants had felt stuck, emotionally, socio-economically and politically, not being able to conceptualise any hope for the future prior to the knowledge that the TRC had been set up to address these issues. Yet clearly many participants were still grieving for their losses many years later – an issue that will be explored in Chapter 5. Ms Lerato was still lamenting her current situation thus:

You see that little girl over there [pointing to her granddaughter sitting outside and waiting for her], she’s a little miracle. She was born at the bus-stop when her mother was trying to run away from the police. I’ve got many grand-children and great-grandchildren. I can’t cope with supporting the whole lot. Their parents can’t find jobs and some are dead, now all are dependent on my pension which would have sufficed if I was only supporting myself. Something needs to be done to prevent social problems. This life needs and must change sometime, somehow [showing exasperation].

#### **4.5 Summary: shared and contrasting themes in the Gauteng and Western Cape groups**

Participants’ accounts of events leading to presentation to the TRC in the two provinces differed in regard to the traumatic socio-political events that had occurred in the geographically separate areas. The participants in the Western Cape seemed more despairing and stuck in their unchanging situations. Despite the extreme violence to which they had been exposed, the Gauteng participants appeared more ‘upbeat’ and more accepting of the reality of their situation, despite some mothers still waiting with frustration to hear about their sons’ disappearances. This may have been because the Gauteng was more vibrant, located near the city of Johannesburg, and those residents had not lost their homes or been relocated frequently. Because of its international

status, more resources are said to be pumped into Soweto. In addition to tangible resources, most of the Gauteng participants claimed to have had counselling, even though some experienced it as being of limited help.

The Cape participants were mainly older and seemed to ruminate and ponder over events in the distant past. What had affected them adversely had more to do with apartheid's 'crimes against humanity', which the TRC had not included in its early mandate. Resources in the Cape Province were extremely limited and thus poverty in these areas ravaged many black families. In addition, communities had been disrupted by forced removals. These were just some of the contextual factors that may have played a part in the different experiences of the two groups.

This chapter has presented an analysis from the Gauteng and Western Cape in relation to the needs and experiences that encouraged participants to give testimony to the TRC. Whilst factors that precipitated testimony giving in the Gauteng province were summarised with eight themes – the state of emergency; state of violence; cracking down on political activists; disappearances; sadness, pain and loss of hope – nine rather different themes were inferred from the Western Cape participants: forced removals; pass laws; loss of jobs/homes/possessions; powerlessness; and feelings of being stuck.

In the Western Cape, the creation of the TRC and the opportunity to give testimony raised hopes and expectations, seeming to offer the chance to redress powerlessness, reunite families and achieve a better quality of life, all of which victims/survivors felt they had lost as a result of the brutality and unfairness of apartheid. In the Gauteng areas, major themes relating to participants' motives for testifying to the TRC were the promises made relating to uncovering the truth about the disappeared young activists and mysterious deaths, the chance to bury loved ones in dignity and reparations in the form of symbolic and monetary compensation.

In regard to preparation for giving testimony, participants varied. Some had not felt at all prepared for the trauma of disclosing details of abusive or violent events. Others portrayed Khulumani as offering preparation and on-going support.

The narratives provided by participants were complex and the categories and themes highlighted here overlapped and consequently have not all been dealt with individually but in some instances have been grouped together. The analysis has highlighted the complexity of the socio-political situation that Western Cape residents



experienced as a result of discriminatory policies under the rule of apartheid, and in Gauteng findings highlighted how a revolutionary state, especially one that has lost control, can result in cycles of violence.

The loss of possessions, homes, culture, values, common spirit and interconnectedness (Ubuntu) led many participants in both areas to testify before the TRC. Most of the atrocities they described took place decades ago, yet most participants still recounted them as if the events had happened yesterday. The powerlessness that older generations felt became significant in how participants perceived themselves, not only as individuals, communities and society, but as part of a black nation within SA.

What became clear is that, although both provinces had different experiences of the past, the main motivator for giving testimony to the TRC was the hope of achieving change in their circumstances, personal, family and community. Whether their initial hopes were fulfilled in the longer term will be explored in Chapter 5, which examines the longer-term legacy of giving testimony from a vantage point about 14 years afterwards.

## **Chapter 5 Findings (2): Exploring the legacy of giving testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Following on from Chapter 4, which explored the motivations that led participants to testify before the TRC, this chapter will explore the meanings of testifying before the Commission, as identified and reappraised by participants many years after their public appearance. Specifically, the analysis focuses on these research objectives:

- to analyse the participants' reported consequences of testifying before the TRC;
- to analyse the extent to which appearing before the TRC impacted on the wellbeing of survivors of human rights violations in the long term;
- to explore the participants' experiences of forgiveness, reconciliation, amnesty and healing.

As shown in the previous chapter, for participants from both provinces, Gauteng and the Western Cape, several psycho-social themes emerged describing participants' motivation to testify to the TRC. For instance, promises were made by the TRC, and the ANC prior to that, which gave survivors hope that disappeared bodies would be recovered and buried, that truth would be revealed about abuses which in turn would be duly acknowledged, that reparations would be made for the loss of lives, and that there would be improvements to fragmented communities, eroded cultures, dignity, possessions and property, and socio-economic conditions.

Although there were some contrasts in participants' accounts from these two provinces, they shared understandings of the process and aftermath of giving testimony. Hence in this chapter, there is one set of categories that presents both groups of participants' concerns.

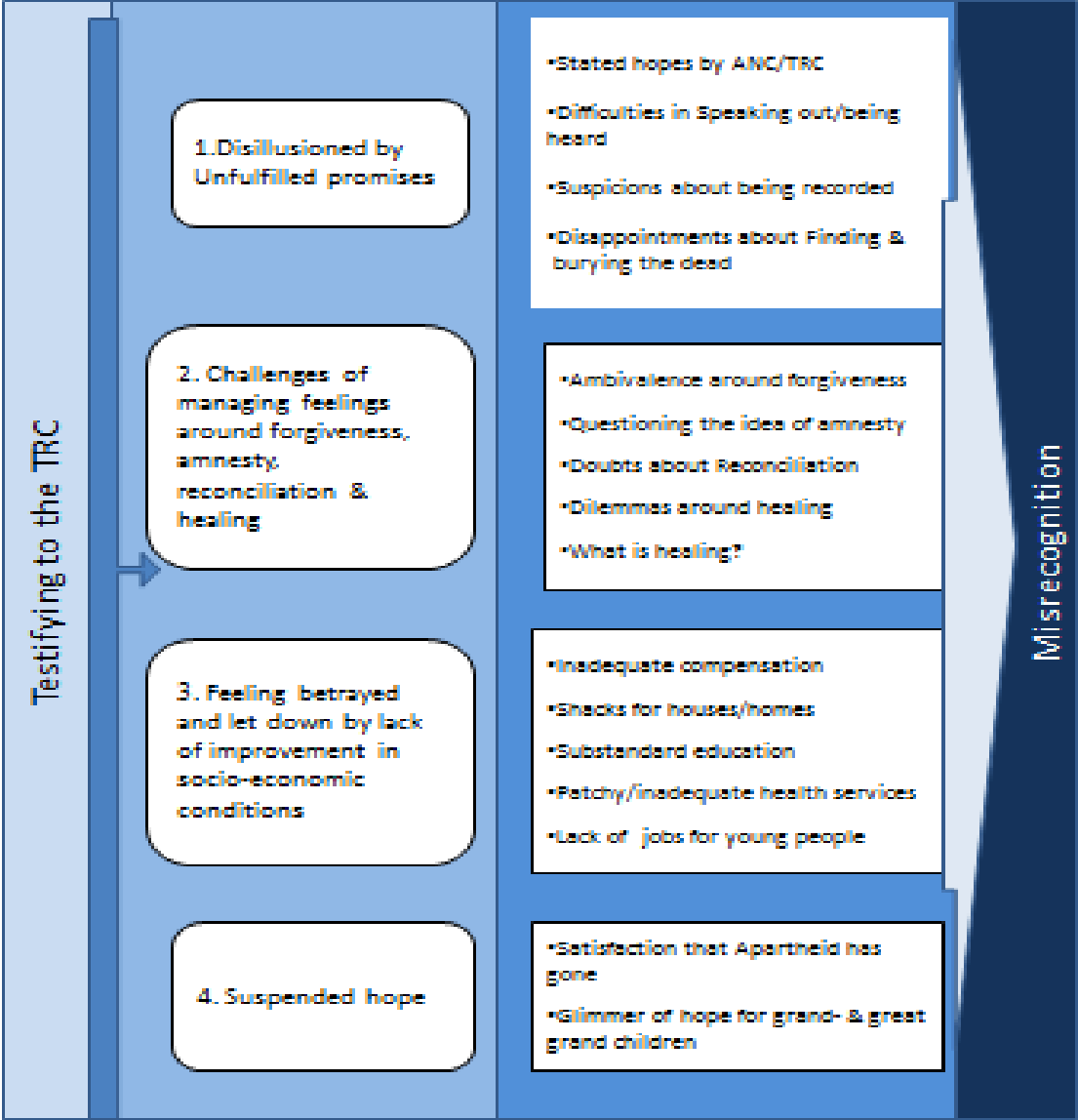
The model shown in Figure 5.1 will guide the reader along the way and help them to understand the aftermath of testifying before the TRC for victims of human rights violations, as appraised many years later. The model reflects the themes in order of prevalence and significance according to victims'/survivors' stories. From the sample of 30 participants I chose to quote from 19 participants on the basis of the accounts they provided and to give the reader more opportunity to see the links in their stories. The selection was also based on the importance, salience and frequency of the emerging themes, such as concern for the disappeared, burying of the dead, socio-economic problems and hope for grandchildren, especially for most women. Men, on the other hand, were concerned with lack of jobs, had difficulty managing forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing, and experienced a lack of hope, especially amongst the younger participants. Older men, especially in the Western Cape, were more concerned with fragmentation of the society's fabric, and eroded communities, traditions and values. Concentrating on quotations from a smaller subsample was intended to help prevent confusion and repetition, and ensure that the reader becomes familiar with and engages with their stories.

The themes that emerged from the analysis present key aspects of the participants' accounts and the impact that testifying had on them during and after the process, in both the short and long term. These themes and their subthemes have been identified using the GTM coding principles of Glaser and Strauss (1967), as refined, improved and outlined by Charmaz (2005). Drawing from experiences consistently shared by participants, four main themes emerged from their accounts, synthesised into an overarching theme. These will be illustrated with extracts from participants' interviews.

The first theme is entitled 'disillusioned by unfulfilled promises' and emerges from four sub-themes: regrets about promises stated by the ANC/TRC; uncertainty about speaking out and being heard; fears about being recorded; and deep disappointment at not finding the disappeared or burying the dead. The second theme is 'challenges of managing feelings around forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing' (FARH). This category is formed from the following four sub-themes: ambivalence surrounding forgiveness; confusion about amnesty; uncertainty about whom to reconcile with; and the ambiguous meaning of healing. The third theme is entitled 'feelings of betrayal and

let down by lack of improved socio-economic conditions’ and has been informed by the following five sub-categories: concerns about inadequate or lack of compensation; concerns about shacks for housing; regrets over substandard education; on-going concern about patchy/inadequate health services; and disappointment about the lack of jobs for young people. The fourth category is ‘suspended hope’ and emerges from two subthemes: apartheid has gone; and a glimmer of hope for grandchildren and great-grandchildren (see Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1** Fourteen years on: reflections on the legacy of giving testimony at the TRC



The overarching or substantive theme emanating from all these themes and sub-themes can be described as 'misrecognition'. It's not easy to define 'misrecognition' in simple terms, but is perhaps better to illustrate instances of the concept. For instance, in the South African context especially, misrecognition involves one group (whites) not giving the other group (blacks) the acknowledgment they deserve as human beings. However, in the case of the TRC, its failure to fulfil its promises towards survivors might also be understood as 'misrecognition' (Thompson & Hoggett, 2011). The core theme of misrecognition will be discussed briefly in this chapter and in more depth in Chapter 6, when the notion of 'No recognition without redistribution' (Fraser, 1998) will be used to interpret the findings further.

## **5.2 Grounded theory model of categories identified from Gauteng and Western Cape interviews**

### **5.2.1 Disillusioned about unfulfilled promises**

This theme captures the essence of what participants described as they realised that over the past 12–14 years, what had been promised by both the TRC and the ANC, when they were recruited to be members or deponents at the TRC, had not materialised. In addition the TRC's promises, the intervening 14 years, had not, in participants' experience, produced much in the form of either emotional or material gains. Most of the participants, especially those from the Western Cape, offered vivid narratives during the interviews about these promises, which they reported as motivating them to join the organisation and give testimony to the TRC.

The four sub-themes contained within this category were linked together to show their relationship to one another and their relationship to the major theme. They will be presented here with extracts from the interviews that illustrate them.

Whilst identifying, linking and analysing categories I have included reflexive accounts in order that the reader can see the co-constructed nature of the findings and to demonstrate my possible influence over the research process (Willig, 2006). In other words, the sociological (and psycho-dynamic) constructions that I developed from studying participants' constructions of their experiences will become clearer (Charmaz, 1990).

### ***Ruminating on the meanings of promises stated by the ANC/TRC***

This is concerned with the participants' feelings that they had joined the ANC and testified to the TRC because they were told that their life would change for the better. Most participants were registered members of the ANC, whether by choice or default, and most still believed that overthrowing the apartheid system was a good thing. They believed that its collapse would bring along benefits for them in the form of human rights, their stories being validated and endorsed, and improved socio-economic circumstances, as promised by the organisation. In its manifesto document, the 'freedom charter', the ANC also declared, amongst other things, that it would end human rights violations and ensure that everybody could share equally in the wealth of the country and have access to all the public services in the country. Although the TRC's mandate was more limited, it clearly aimed to investigate the nature and extent of human rights violations, record them and ensure they never happened again. Mrs Bohloko, who used to be a leader in the ANC women's league, said:

When recruiting members the ANC told us that when SA is liberated we will all enjoy the benefits of freedom. Yes, they said we will be like whites in the country. That's why I joined and that's why my son joined. Now he's dead. Apartheid killed him before he could enjoy the fruits of the struggle. My family and I are left wondering when we'll enjoy the fruits of liberation.

Clearly for Mrs Bohloko liberation equals freedom and benefits. The promise to 'live like whites' suggests that whites in South Africa lived a very privileged existence that must be envied by others and aimed for. So aiming to live like a 'SA white' was seen as a goal of emancipation. It appears that Mrs Bohloko's whole family was investing in the political struggle with high hopes for some positive returns in the form of better socio-economic conditions. She went on to say that her son was a budding human rights lawyer and could have been 'somebody', meaning a very important person in the new South Africa. However, she said, all those hopes were dashed in a matter of seconds. Involved in investigating cases of human rights abuses for ANC activists, he was expecting information on a case he was going to defend in court when he opened a letter bomb sent by the government's counter-insurgents and was killed.

In the ANC's freedom charter, which was all-embracing, promises of free basic public services for all, such as housing, health and education, were made. Mrs Thapelo from Sebokeng stated: 'I was told that joining the ANC would guarantee me a big house with a garden and a swimming pool when we win the liberation.'

It seems intriguing that victims/survivors could have believed in such promises. However, victims of human rights violations, who are mainly poor people, tend to experience their constructions as reality: 'their constructions are neither convenient fabrications nor idiosyncratic inventions. Rather poor people's constructions reflect their understanding of their experiences as well as the diverse situations in which they have them' (Charmaz, 1990: 1161). The promise of a 'big house with a garden and a swimming pool' sounded to me like a metaphor standing for improved living standards. In making such promises, especially to very poor people, the ANC ran the risk of being deeply distrusted if it failed to deliver. This was confirmed by Mrs Matola, who said that she took the ANC seriously because she believed in it. To show that she was committed to it, she said she was prepared to die for it; but sadly, looking back after the 1990 elections, Mrs Matola stated her regrets:

It's a real shame, after all the promises nothing much has happened. We fought for freedom and were promised better things but alas this is one of the failings of the new government. I should feel angry but because I had joined the ANC and dedicated my life to the struggle – just like Mr Mandela – at my age I can only sit back and watch.

The ANC, by making such optimistic promises, inadvertently appeared to have caused a lot of distress and feelings of dejection for most of its members. The participants expressed feelings of betrayal concerning its inability to deliver even the most basic services that it had apparently promised. This sense of betrayal, expressed by most participants, only compounded the feelings of being devalued and lied to. This helped to compound participants' state of confusion about who, between the GNU and the TRC, was responsible for ensuring that the reparation and rehabilitation programme was delivered to those who 'deserved' it.

Similarly, the TRC appeared to have given people hope for the future as regards more than the investigation of human rights violations. Most participants reported that they had been made to believe that, if they appeared before the TRC, a lot was going to change with regard to their conditions of living, most of which were substandard during the apartheid regime. Mr Mathatha explained what one of the TRC commissioners said to him after taking down his statement:

‘You will receive an amount of R100,000 or more once you have testified, receive regular physiotherapy, buy houses for all those who did not have and educate my child. All that never happened except for a small fraction of all that was promised.’

To be promised this amount of money was important for Mr Mathatha. Being told how much he was going to receive created very important expectations for someone who had suffered multiple injuries during the ‘wars’, including a damaged and semi-paralysed leg, and a hearing problem due to a bullet wound. Yet he failed to obtain a disability grant because the government felt he was not sufficiently disabled.

Khulumani was also thought to have failed to deliver its promises. For example, Mrs Landela said a woman from the Khulumani support group came to her, took down a statement from her and then said: ‘As someone whose child was killed in the wars, we will educate the rest of your children and build you a house...’ Mrs Landela added: ‘I’m still waiting.’

It is really disheartening when individuals in authority make promises but fail to honour them without providing good reasons. This certainly had changed the way victims viewed officials in high positions and the distrust engendered as a result could have a deleterious effect on vulnerable people’s wellbeing. It led many to question the value of giving testimony.

### ***Feeling cheated about speaking out/being heard***

The victims described being encouraged to come forward to share their stories with the public in front of the TRC, and being informed that by so doing they would feel acknowledged and endorsed, and therefore much better in themselves. But during the



TRC proceedings, most survivors couldn't talk because they were so affected by the emotions that were running in the hearings halls. Mrs Landela said:

When I arrived where the meeting was, I found people weeping and wailing as some related traumatic stories. The whole hall was full of people doing nothing but crying. It was so sad and painful. I found myself being engulfed in this 'tide of emotions' as I recalled what had happened to my son.

It is clear from this extract that listening to traumatic stories had an infectious effect. The feeling of being 'engulfed' meant that Mrs Landela was overwhelmed; consequently, she could not relate her story properly, and worse, could not follow the proceedings.

She related that the whole episode was so confusing that she did not even remember who attended the meeting or who was chairing it. She had to leave the hall as she found that she was suffocating and could not breathe properly. Such experiences left participants feeling bare and vulnerable, as after they had opened up there was nothing else to fill the void with. As one participant, Mrs Tumelo, said: 'I felt like my heart was opened up but there was no surgeon to put it back together again.' For Mrs Tumelo, the enormity of sharing traumatic experiences left her exposed without a safety net. That may be one reason why most of the participants kept on referring back to the 'unfinished business' of the TRC.

As there was no follow-up support, most participants said that the experience left them bereft of energy, emotionally and physically, and they subsequently felt re-traumatised. Even in the research interviews more than 10 years after this experience, many participants described themselves as continually suffering from deep, entrenched emotional scars. Furthermore, when survivors expressed feelings of not having shared their stories properly, it follows that they felt that they had not been heard.

Mrs Moya epitomised the confusion that was taking place during these hearings. She said that despite the fact that she was prepared for the hearing, she just could not remember anybody who was present. She claimed not to have seen the perpetrators even though it was reported later that they had been present in the hearings. She said: 'I cried a lot because I was remembering my dead children. I cried so much as if I was going

to faint. So I was taken outside for fresh air and didn't go back in – I couldn't bear to go back in there.'

For Mrs Moya the memory of her deceased children was still so vivid that it became difficult to engage in verbal communication. She could only demonstrate her sorrow by crying. For her, the feelings were so overwhelming that she ceased to tolerate the heaviness of the event. The atmosphere was suffocating; she couldn't breathe and consequently could not bear to return to the stifling conditions in the hearings hall. So her story was not heard properly, or recorded, and consequently her dignity was not restored. Many years later, as I interviewed them, they all still wished to talk because of their bottled-up emotions and still-vivid memories of the atrocities they had suffered. This confirms again the 'unfinished business' that the TRC is charged with leaving.

### ***Concerns about not being recorded***

Many regarded the pain of giving testimony as worthwhile so long as their story was made available to the public. However, some participants not only found it difficult to tell their stories (as mentioned in the previous section), but also believed that their stories could not have been recorded. Despite the presence of the media and packed hearings, this concern still haunted them many years after giving their accounts. Mrs Bohloko expressed this view when she explained: 'After testifying the TRC promised to record our stories but I haven't seen any such record.' When I asked what steps she had taken to find out, she said: 'I could be wrong but I don't remember anyone suggesting where the reports would be kept and nobody came back to us to say where we would find the written stories.' I asked her about the five written volumes produced by the TRC, but she replied: 'I'm telling you, if other survivors have seen and read the records, I haven't.'

I could sense that Mrs Bohloko was becoming exasperated with my line of questioning and probably felt that I didn't believe her. She went on to explain that the only way of knowing what was written was to read the newspapers. But again she felt that newspaper stories were different from the well-researched reports that she had expected from the TRC. This accusation resonated with the earlier comments from Khulumani's director, that researchers come and obtain stories from survivors but never

come back with feedback. This may explain the director's reluctance to expose the group's members without a stringent vetting process.

Mrs Moya's experience concurred with Mrs Bohloko's account. She said: 'After testifying they promised to get back to us but they never did up until now. They never got back – *they did nothing*. So I have no idea if they did record my story.'

There exists in this account an ambivalence about the promise made and its subsequent fulfilment. I sensed Mrs Moya's distrust of the TRC in her bold statement '*they did nothing*' (her emphasis) and the length of time since the promise was made. It was at this stage that I decided there was no point questioning why survivors had not found out for themselves about the whereabouts of the reports. I recorded my reflections in the reflexive extract below:

19/05/2010. I felt bad that Mrs Bohloko actually could pick up a suspicion that I was questioning how participants attempted to locate information for themselves. She probably thought I was being critical. I must admit I did not realise I was doing that until she subtly pointed it out to me. *I must have been doing it unconsciously* or maybe with all this aggravation and distress Mrs Bohloko became very sensitive about these issues that she had no control over and unconsciously projected them onto the researcher ... In hindsight I realised how insensitive I had been as well as being unaware of the difficulties powerless people experience to access services due to the lack of or limited resources available to them. Libraries are 'special' places where only the privileged go to for information, especially in SA. Public libraries are a luxury – not a familiar site for the poor to consider when they need information. Middle class, educated and students are the ones who are more likely to search for information and resort to libraries when other sources are not available. In addition I was painfully reminded of Khulumani's director's remarks that researchers come and get stories from victims/survivors and thereafter disappear without proper feedback. Something for me to remember.

In contrast, Mrs Tshepo from Soweto reported that the only way she and her family were made aware of what was happening around them was through her elder

son, who was a keen user of libraries. She said: 'Vuyani [her son] was always visiting the library and bringing along clips from newspapers, and that's how I got to know about what had happened to my disappeared son [one of the "Mofolo 3"]'. It might have been easier to access information in Soweto, where libraries are situated. In contrast to most places in black SA, Soweto is relatively well resourced, as described in Chapter 4.

Mrs Bohloko said that, despite the disappointment and betrayal felt by victims/survivors and the lack of follow-up by the TRC, Khulumani had helped participants to stage dramas and plays about their experiences. She said: 'We've already been to London and Europe staging this drama called "This story which I'm about to tell" and it generated a lot of interest.'

I realised that one of the single most important reasons for testifying to the TRC amongst participants was to be heard. Sharing, they believed, was going to open up all sorts of possibilities and the beginning of new avenues. Mrs Bohlale contemplated: 'I was glad I was interviewed on TV. This means my story was heard everywhere in the world.' Being on television seemed to have validated and endorsed her suffering. In a sense, she felt that she had been listened to and heard, which was very important for a lot of participants' respect and dignity.

Both Mrs Bohlale and Bohloko conceded that, if not properly recorded within SA at the time of the TRC, at least their stories have been circulating worldwide, as they have been involved in telling them through plays and dramas organised by Khulumani. This was important to keep the hope alive that these stories would be acknowledged and validated abroad, if not at home.

### ***Disillusionment about finding and burying the dead***

One of the most important sources of disillusionment with giving testimony concerned the failure by the TRC to uncover the bodies of participants' 'disappeared' loved ones. Most participants said they were encouraged to forgo their emotions and risk re-traumatisation by telling their stories to the wider community as a result of this particular promise.

The experiences of the participants, as supported by their accounts, bear testimony to their perceptions and suggest that the South African TRC failed at both the individual and the collective levels in terms of delivery. For instance, some participants,

especially in Gauteng, still felt aggrieved that their sons' bodies had not been recovered yet. Even 14 years after the TRC hearings, there did not appear to be a push towards further searches. Participants claimed that the mood in the country felt like a suspended sentence or a stalemate. Mrs Tshepo cried: 'I'm deeply saddened that up till now – 23 years after the disappearance of my son – his body has not been found yet. How can I heal?'

Here Mrs Tshepo was closely linking up healing with recovering the body of her son. Even though not explicit, in some cultures, the ability and opportunity to bury the dead is a great responsibility. Not burying loved ones, according to traditional custom, created a lot of discontent amongst participants. Mrs Tshepo claimed that her life depended on that body being found; she could never rest and this meant a lot for her state of mind. The slimmer the possibility of the recovery of the body, as the years had elapsed, the more her pain had increased – a situation that Freud would have described as 'chronic melancholy'. The issue of mourning and melancholia will be explored in Chapter 6.

Mrs Tumelo experienced a similar situation and revealed her pain as follows: 'The thought of his body lying somewhere, unknown and in a desolate place, will never leave me. I can't stop thinking about it ...' Such statements show the tendency to objectify sorrow, mourning and loss of a loved one as if the person is still alive and needing attention. Somehow the feeling of wishing to do the right thing prevents people from moving on until such an act has been executed, despite the fact that in some cases the possibility of the act being executed is very slim. The inability to let go and move on is precisely what I sensed from Mrs Tshepo's and Mrs Tumelo's anguish, still so vivid many years after the loss of their sons.

In Cape Town, Mr Motsomotso complained that during the forced removals, they were being chased around and were running away fearfully in all different directions from government officials driving big removal trucks. He said that during the process he lost his son and his girlfriend, his son's mother, in the prevailing chaos. He recalled:

They just vanished in front of my eyes and were never seen again. I truly don't know what happened to them but for all I know they could have died in the

scramble. Many people died then and the TRC promised to search and recover their bodies. I'm still waiting as I can't get them out of my mind. I'm stuck.

Most participants said that the idea that people can just 'vanish' in front of your eyes was scary, and the helplessness of not knowing what to do or where to turn to for support alienated them from their communities. Mr Motsomotso lamented: 'It would have been better if I knew that they had definitely died but not knowing is more debilitating as I can't make plans for proper burials, even symbolically.'

Mrs Tumelo and Mrs Tshepo still harboured hopes that the bodies of their loved ones would be recovered, one day. Mrs Tshepo convinced herself: 'I really did hope that the new government under the leadership of Mr Mandela would facilitate the process of searching and locating my son. I had hopes then and am still hoping now. I can't afford to lose hope.'

There may have been some consolation for both in believing that their loved ones were dead, but they could not recognise the possibility that their bodies might never be found. As Mrs Tumelo reasoned:

... being a human being you can't help but hope. I know now that my husband is dead however I still cannot prove it because I do not have his body. But I sincerely hope that the new government will continue to search for his remains and let me have and bury him with the respect he deserves.

It is interesting that both Mrs Tshepo and Mrs Tumelo mentioned the new government rather than the TRC. At this point the TRC's role had been accepted as done (or incomplete), and people have moved on, for the better or not.

Mrs Bohlale, whose son disappeared at the same time as Mrs Tshepo's son (both members of the 'Mofolo 3'), expressed a different view. Even though her son's body was recovered, she was still unhappy and hurting at the way he had been buried in a mass grave by the 'insensitive and brutal' apartheid state, as she described it. She said: 'I'm very pleased that my son's body was recovered even though it was painful to watch it exhumed from a grave full of other bodies. The government's counter-insurgents were very callous indeed. They just dumped all these kids in one big hole ...'

It is evident from the above account that, although the TRC did not appear to have satisfied most of the participants in this sample on this particular issue, there were a few who felt that some good, albeit on a small scale, had come out of some of its functions. Mrs Bohlale had at least she had been able to bury her son in dignity and in some way she could rebuild her life and move on.

This shows the importance of being able to bury loved ones, no matter the circumstances under which they have died. This issue is especially important in the South African culture and will be explored further in Chapter 6.

### **5.2.2 Challenges of managing feelings around forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing**

One of the most important tasks of the South African TRC was to match amnesty for the perpetrators with reparations for the victims, intending that victims of human right violations extended a hand of forgiveness to all those perpetrators who admitted committing politically motivated crimes. By reconciling victims with perpetrators, the TRC also hoped that this feeling of reconciliation would be extended to society as a whole. Most participants felt that they were expected to forgive perpetrators even though most did not believe that perpetrators warranted forgiveness.

#### ***Ambivalence surrounding forgiveness***

Most participants said they were confused about the expectations placed on them to forgive and that they continued to feel confused. Whilst they considered forgiving, they were confused about why it felt as if they had no choice in the matter. They said they had the impression that the only way forward was through forgiveness. Of course, the TRC's hopes were pinned on victims agreeing to forgive, even though in truth the victims' consent was not really needed for amnesty to be awarded. Some participants were torn between their religious beliefs of unconditional forgiveness, and their innermost feelings of declining to forgive.

Ms Mabena reasoned: 'Forgiveness must come from the heart. You shouldn't be told to do it. I thought about this and said to myself, "God, you gave me life but sorry I can't forgive B." I'm not working because of him. I'm still suffering after many years of torture at his hands.' Whilst torn between her religion and cultural values of respecting

the dead, she still felt she could not forgive. For her, this situation might cause unresolvable pain in the long term. It appears that she was saying that perpetrators should atone for the crimes committed and the pain caused; if not, they should not expect forgiveness. This emphasised the fact that, even at the time of the interview, many years after the TRC hearings, her suffering continued.

Mrs Malema, in contrast, was not as definite about her idea of forgiveness and highlighted the dilemmas and turmoil that most survivors experienced in forgiving people who had caused them so much pain. Her son was 15 when he and his fellow comrades were set upon by the IFP. About 20 of them were rounded up, locked in a shack, beaten up and attacked with machetes; they even witnessed the head of one youngster being chopped off. Her son was so severely traumatised that he developed severe and enduring mental health problems. At first, she said:

I would have forgiven but when you look at my son's life – he is a total mess – and what has been done to him, he's no longer going to live a normal life and I am going to have to care for him for the rest of his and my life.

But when I explored further about how she was feeling as a person, deep down in her heart, about forgiveness, she responded by saying: 'Yes, I suppose I might have to forgive because there's not a lot I can do about what happened. I can't let this emotion rule me. I can only pray to God who has said: "Forgive your neighbour as you would expect me to forgive you."' Such religious dilemmas crept in, in some way helping people to make decisions in favour of forgiveness. Mrs Malema's account is a clear example of people feeling pressurised to do the right thing despite their innermost true feelings.

This emphasises how complex the notion of forgiveness is, as despite some participants having offered forgiveness, this gesture did not translate into obliteration or reduction of their suffering in the longer term. Therefore the passage of time did not ameliorate the pain; instead the disappointment increased over the years as a result of the failure of the TRC to honour its promises. By putting pressure on participants to forgive, the TRC had arguably placed an unfair burden on already traumatised individuals, and this imposition has tended to make survivors – especially those who did not wish to forgive – feel guilty, thereby perpetuating their suffering. From these



interviews conducted so many years after giving testimony, most participants appeared to remain in a perpetual state of anguish.

However, it was clear from the interviews that not all participants expressed an unwillingness to forgive, as highlighted by Mrs Bohlale, for example, who said: 'I have no option but to forgive. If Mr Mandela forgave, why can't I?' Again participants were faced with dilemmas of making decisions about whether they should give up the right to resentment and proffer the gift of compassion to perpetrators whom they perceived as not deserving it. Indeed, most were unanimous in their feelings that perpetrators should be punished.

Like Mrs Bohlale above, the few participants who claimed to have forgiven did so because important leaders, such Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Tutu, expected them to do it, as they themselves had forgiven. None of the participants indicated that they felt that it was important to forgive because it was a good thing to do for themselves: that is, unconditionally.

Even those who forgave did so conditionally. If it was not because of the example set by Mandela and Tutu, it was because of their religion. Whatever the reasons, none actually said they forgave because of 'self-interest'. This again suggests that the experience of forgiveness is profoundly complex. It appears that the TRC did not address it sufficiently, which may have undermined its own efforts and confused victims, most of whom believed that the way to deal with crimes was to prosecute the offenders.

On the other hand, some shared Mrs Bohlale's situation. She also confessed that she found it easier to forgive because at least her son's body was exhumed and she was able to bury him.

Many participants claimed not to have forgiven voluntarily, claiming that there appeared to be encouragement or an expectation to forgive, on the part of the TRC. Mrs Matola clarified this for me. She said:

It was on the day of 'forgiveness'. This day was arranged. There were lots of people including priests and other church people. We were told to meet there, in Houtkop where a church service was held. Many letters were read and after that we were told that what happened has happened and we should forgive.

However, we were not able to identify these people [perpetrators] who did this to us and our children.

Mrs Matola seems to have been alluding to the fact that victims did not make independent decisions about forgiveness. They were told to do it, like children. She kept on saying that 'they told us'. Participants reported that if they did not feel willing to forgive, they ended up feeling guilty because people like Nelson Mandela and others kept on being mentioned as models of good behaviour. If they did not forgive, they felt they were looked at as displaying bad or unchristian behaviour.

Ms Bohloko was not swayed by this rhetoric; she experienced no ambivalence about whether or not she ought or not have forgiven. She said:

Even in my deepest heart I cannot find any compassion to forgive this man. He was the most arrogant person I have come across. He did not ask for forgiveness, he did not show any remorse and lacked respect for the people he caused so much pain.

Mrs Bohloko's comment appears to subvert the TRC's doctrine of 'Truth or forgiveness: The road to reconciliation' (Moosa, Straker and Eagle 2004:216). When the identity of the perpetrator or the truth about the atrocities was revealed, some survivors found it difficult to listen to the heinous ways in which their loved ones had been executed. This prevented them from contemplating forgiveness.

Some participants felt that the right thing to do when a crime has been committed is for the offender to be arrested, prosecuted in a court of law and punished if found guilty. Not prosecuting perpetrators represented a great betrayal of trust for these participants. Mr Lesedi complained: 'Why can't they be prosecuted? They committed atrocious crimes. Why can't the GNU prosecute them in the same way that we were in the days of apartheid, even though we didn't commit such grievous crimes.'

Mr Lesedi believed that the rule of law should apply today as it was practised and applied so strictly during apartheid, especially in the case of blacks. He wondered why the perpetrators' atrocities were treated less seriously, as this meant that his experiences stood for nothing. Having testified to the TRC concerning a massacre

perpetrated by IFP members, he felt humiliated and cheated by its response, and this continued to hurt more than a decade later.

Mrs Tumelo, whose husband's body had also not yet been recovered, said she felt distress and anger over the length of time it had taken for her husband's body to be found. She said:

I can't even think about forgiving anybody at the moment. I'm still in mourning. I have not been able to engage in proper traditional and cultural practices of burying my husband in dignity and respect. The whole situation has caused too much pain and related deaths in the family.

She blamed the failure to bury her husband's body for all the other deaths that took place after the TRC. The longer it took for the TRC to unearth the whereabouts of disappeared people, the longer it would take for survivors to heal. She attributed her weakening heart and consequent feelings of being 'stuck' to not knowing where and when her husband's body would be recovered.

In some instances, perpetrators did not attend the hearings; hence the question frequently asked by survivors: 'who shall we forgive when we can't see them?' For others it was the behaviour of the TRC, the failed promises or the level of atrocity that determined whether they forgave. This dilemma remained powerful and unresolved many years after testimony giving. Initial post-TRC feelings of euphoria – relief that apartheid had gone, general feelings of freedom, the renewal of hope, and the restoration of dignity – were largely dissipated, leaving participants 10 or more years later with an on-going sense of anxiety.

### ***Why amnesty?***

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines 'amnesty' as a general pardon, especially of political offences. Hamber, Nageng and O'Malley (2000: 37) describe it as 'the central tenet' of the TRC process'. Although it came about as the outcome of a 'negotiated settlement' between the NP and the ANC, the TRC sought to provide legitimacy for the amnesty process by addressing survivors' needs to find out the truth about what had happened and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions (Phakathi & Van der Merwe, 2008).

However, the question here is: will participants who have not forgiven or have been confused about forgiving find it acceptable for perpetrators to be awarded amnesty? Again, the interview data collected more than 10 years after the TRC process emphasised the long-term nature of the physical and psychological suffering endured by participants, most of whom disagreed with the TRC amnesty provision.

Ms Mabena, who had previously declared that forgiveness must come from the heart, when asked how she felt about the TRC awarding amnesty to perpetrators, said: 'I don't think they should be given amnesty at all, even when they're dead. I am suffering today through his deeds and his faults. I don't agree with amnesty' (referring to the man who tortured her whilst in prison and who has since died).

It seemed that for Ms Mabena she had only managed to retain a semblance of self-respect and dignity by withdrawing both forgiveness and amnesty from the perpetrator. She realised that there was not a lot she could do about her situation but exact revenge, even in the absence of a live body. She complained about how the perpetrator had killed men and women – parents of vulnerable children, who are now left to fend for themselves.

Equally, for Mrs Tshepo and Mrs Tumelo, awarding amnesty did not appear to be a consideration, given the failure of the TRC to recover the bodies of their loved ones, and consequently their reluctance to forgive. Mrs Tumelo said: 'It would have been disingenuous of me to have considered amnesty at that stage when I had hardly considered forgiveness.' Mrs Tumelo was clearly being true to herself and the memory of her deceased husband. She said she would be betraying the memory of her deceased husband if she even contemplated either forgiveness and or amnesty. Allied to this is the idea of avenging the dead – revenge, when considered morally, is 'a desire to keep faith with the dead, to honour their memory by taking their cause where they left off' (Ignatief, 1996:188).

For Mrs Bohloko it was the same response: she categorically stated that she would never, under any circumstance, accept that amnesty should be given to the man she so reviled. She said: 'There is no question about it. He killed human beings like they were ants. Clearly he does not respect human life. So he shouldn't be entitled to amnesty.' By comparing her family and her life with lowly ants, Mrs Bohloko shows how degraded she had felt. That her son's life could have been reduced to nothing more than

that of an insect which can be crushed underfoot, appeared to have greatly affected her. She demonstrated what many of the participants believed: that perpetrators of serious crimes should be made accountable for their deeds, not appear to have been 'let off the hook'.

### ***Doubts about reconciliation***

'At present no one can answer this question since no rigorous and systematic assessment of the success of the truth and reconciliation process has ever been done' (Gibson, 2004: 129). Reconciliation was the main goal of the South African TRC; in fact, it was the ultimate aim. The Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995) mandated the Commission to promote reconciliation (Hamber, 2009). This was a prerequisite to ensuring a smooth transfer of political power and consequently a promise of peaceful co-existence in post-apartheid SA.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, to reconcile means to 'make friendly after estrangement', to 'humanise' or to 'make compatible'. Krog (2009: 355), in linking reconciliation with 'Ubuntu', describes reconciliation as 'mutual commitment to an improved ethical future'. Whilst forgiveness presents a change in the harmed person, reconciliation presents a change in both parties. Whilst there an on-going debate about whether reconciliation is conditional or not, in these interviews the researcher tried to assess the views and attitudes of participants towards reconciling with perpetrators: that is, 'micro-reconciliation' (Gibson, 2004).

When asked about their understanding and what their feelings were regarding reconciliation, most participants felt that it was a dream: it would be good to achieve but it should be an on-going process. Others expressed doubts about its realisation. Mr Lesedi said: 'White people are used to keeping themselves separate from other groups because of their privileged positions. They don't want to share.'

It is perhaps not surprising that participants should feel that, as long as they were not operating on an equal level with whites, reconciliation could not take place. This can also be applied to forgiveness: for one party to forgive, both the offended and the offender ought to be on an equal level. Thus to achieve genuine reconciliation in the context of post-apartheid SA was inconceivable to most participants. This was reiterated by Mrs Moya: 'It seemed as if we were the ones who wanted to integrate. We were and

are still working hard at it – on our own, though, as it is not in the interest of white people to share the resources of the country.’

As we have seen, most participants found it difficult to manage feelings about forgiveness. So it was not surprising that they found the idea of reconciliation equally difficult even after more than a decade post-apartheid. This is ironic in the sense that, whilst most participants claimed and initially hoped that freedom would bring improved living conditions, they still did not believe that reconciliation would take place. This contested the TRC’s doctrine of ‘Truth: The road to reconciliation’.

Dilemmas, confusion and ambivalences continued to hound victims/survivors. Mrs Landela, when asked about reconciliation, said: ‘ I don’t think we should integrate. We should stay separate but equal because I can’t see whites and blacks living together, not in my life time anyway.’ This went against the ANC’s freedom charter, which stipulated that the ‘country [should belong] to all who live in it irrespective of colour, creed or religion, but also that the country will never be prosperous and free until all people live in *brotherhood*, enjoying equal rights and opportunities’ (Vadi, 1995).

Mrs Landela’s feelings indicated that some participants believed the situation had gone too far to be redeemed. Once there was a time when political activists believed that freedom was going to be absolute, but during this long journey hope sprang and vanished again.

### ***Dilemmas around healing***

This theme is very much linked to motivations for testimony giving – the idea that by telling their stories survivors would experience some kind of relief or healing; others called it ‘catharsis’. As highlighted in the previous chapter, participants were motivated to tell of their suffering in public, partly by promises of monetary compensation and improved socio-economic conditions, and partly by the hope of gaining public acknowledgement, obtaining the truth and eventually achieving closure and healing. However, there were many factors that affected the experience of healing and many participants were still struggling to experience healing even many years later.

Mrs Moya said: ‘When M from Khulumani came to talk to us about the TRC, she told us that by sharing our stories we will feel better in our spirits and our wounds will be healed.’ Mrs Moya believed that by releasing bottled-up and painful experiences she

would be rid of all negative feelings that were making her feel ill, and this would make it easier for her to forgive her perpetrators. By being able to forgive, she thought she would start feeling better in herself. But when asked if she felt healed after she testified, she said:

I can't tell you because as I said before as everybody was crying on that day it just felt as if I was going again through the first pain I experienced when my children were killed. I cried a lot and didn't feel any better afterwards, instead I felt worse.

Here I had the sense that Mrs Moya might have been re-traumatised by the experience, which might be why she was still experiencing both physical health problems in the form of a heart condition and unresolved mourning. Mrs Moya had experienced difficulties with forgiving, as she felt that without perpetrators appearing before the victims it was difficult to forgive them. So having not forgiven, it appeared that she would have found it equally improbable to feel healed.

Mrs Tumelo, when asked about how she experienced the effects of healing following presentation to the TRC, said:

I believe that sharing is beneficial but healing is different. Healing is on-going and for me it is so because of the counselling I have and am still receiving for the last 2 years – not because of testifying to the TRC. At the time I testified my husband's body had not been recovered as it is still the case now. Even though I'm not wearing mourning clothes I'm still in the mourning process.

It is very clear from this statement that Mrs Tumelo understood precisely her own feelings about the capacity to heal. She is highlighting a very important issue here about how claims of healing might be interpreted differently by different people: for some, healing is a process, whilst for her it might have meant a release of pent-up emotions but not necessarily dealing with the cause of the problem. Despite having had the opportunity to share her grief in public, 'the power of cathartic healing' (Drozdek, 2010:

11) never took place, but instead she has had to have additional professional assistance to help her cope.

For Mrs Tshepo, who had not been able to bury her loved one, said: 'I will only be healed when my son's bones are recovered.' This was like Mrs Tumelo, who was still 'holding an empty coffin'. The empty coffin here symbolises the hope that someday something will happen to fill that empty space.

Most participants believed that testifying had a negative impact on them, as most were not even able to share their stories properly due to the level of emotions experienced in the hearings, as noted earlier. They said they were reminded of the painful experiences of losing loved ones, and consequently felt re-traumatised. Most did not feel that their wellbeing had been improved in any meaningful way. Some were ambivalent about the TRC's processes and said they felt confused that some things were promised and then not given. Some participants felt that whilst some outcomes were positive, most were not; hence they experienced only tenuous healing effects. They talked about double standards and believed that the TRC was not victim/survivor oriented as it was originally intended to be. At the time of these interviews (i.e. about 14 years later), the majority stated that healing had not taken place. Some participants had experienced a helpful emotional change but only through their own resources, such as professional counselling and the support that they had received from Khulumani.

### **5.2.3 Feeling betrayed and let down by a lack of improved socio-economic conditions**

Here I would like to highlight to the reader how lack of improvement in the socio-economic conditions of victims/survivors may have led participants to feel confused about the TRC's role. Historically, the unfair, unequal and discriminatory policies of apartheid had an adverse effect on people in all sorts of different ways, psychologically, socio-economically and otherwise. However, one of the reasons why participants felt empowered to testify before the TRC was its promise or undertaking, firstly, to award compensation to victims, and secondly, to improve victims'/survivors' standards of living. When these socio-economic improvements did not materialise, participants were left feeling terribly disillusioned



### ***Regrets about inadequate compensation***

The payment of reparations was expected to alleviate poverty and to help with the consequences of human rights violations (Picker, 2005). This was regarded by the participants as a specific promise made by the TRC. This perception was reinforced by a phrase that the commissioners often used to conclude the hearings: ‘what can we the commission do to help you?’ As it was not explained what this meant, the question created expectations that it was within the Commission’s ambit to respond directly to victims’ needs (Picker, 2005).

According to participants’ accounts, compensation involved monetary recompense that the TRC promised the victims at the time when they were encouraged to come forward and share their stories. Whilst participants received other promises of what the TRC could provide, such as tracking down perpetrators and truth telling, the issue of monetary compensation came about when the TRC was eager for victims to testify, so that perpetrators could be forgiven and a problematic political transfer could be averted.

Generally, participants claimed that all they wished for was the acknowledgement of their suffering during apartheid and the restoration of respect and dignity. This aspect of the TRC’s function came under the umbrella term, ‘reparation and rehabilitation’. However, this programme caused much discontent and confusion as participants were not clear what was entailed, and still do not know many years later. Furthermore, certain amounts of money were recommended initially by the TRC, only to be reduced later after a decision made by the president of SA at that time. Mr Mathatha said:

When Ms M from Khulumani came to take our statements and explain what the TRC stands for, she added that that TRC will give us R100,000 over six years. That was the initial sum quoted. However, later we were told it was no longer going to be that amount, as it had been reduced to a one-off payment of R30,000.

When asked how he got to know about this decision to reduce the compensation money, he said: 'One morning, on TV we heard an MP announcing that President Mbeki decided that we, victims, should all be given a one-off payment of R30,000.'

Even though Mr Mathatha explained that it was not so much about the money, disillusionment did follow from promises being reneged upon. The government's reduction in the promised compensation made participants think that their painful experiences and their stories meant very little. For most participants, who were also members of the ANC, the hurt went deeper as it involved the organisation that they had trusted for so many years to deliver on its promises. In other words, the foundations of their trust were shaken.

Most felt that their experiences of atrocities were diminished by the small amount of compensation awarded. Even though they felt that money could not bring back their dead or compensate sufficiently for what they had lost materially and symbolically, reducing the reparations money meant to them that the government regarded their experiences as unimportant. They felt degraded and exploited. This experience resonated with the degrading and dehumanising treatment they had received at the hands of the apartheid regime, which they still remembered so well.

Although most participants expressed feelings of being let down, some expressed real anger at being duped. Mr Lesedi said:

I have been a member of the ANC since I was 15, 16, somewhere around there, and had been very much involved in the 'struggle'. I've used dustbin lids and stones to protect and defend myself against the onslaught of the apartheid security officers and the IFP. I did this because I believed that I was fighting for the liberation of all. Now I'm jobless and have no chances of improving my situation. The people in government are now more interested in lining their pockets rather than concerning themselves with people who have suffered. I'm extremely angry.

For Mr Lesedi and Mr Mathatha, this was one of the most painful experiences of their lives. They grew up in an organisation that had made them many promises and instead of developing themselves they had been unselfish enough to forgo education and

material things to help fight for liberation. Now they felt left out, whilst those who had concentrated on themselves (even their own 'comrades' in high positions) had forgotten about them. The rude awakening for them was that their commitment to the struggle did not pay off after all. As Mr Mathata reckoned: 'Everybody is on the gravy train but not us.'

A few participants felt grateful that some money was made available. For example, Mrs Moya was happy with the offer, although she felt the amount was tiny. She said: 'I can't complain. The money came at the right time. It covered funeral costs.' I reflected on this comment in my journal:

18/05/2010. This led me to believe that when people are caught in vulnerable situations they might find it hard sometimes to negotiate better conditions, especially in the South African context where almost everything was a struggle for a lot of black people for decades. Just like the belief by most participants, in the promise that when freedom had been realised black people will 'live like whites', it could have been difficult to refuse any offer of money in case other offers do not materialise, as has already happened. To refuse might not have guaranteed better offers, instead they might have lost even the little that was awarded. I believe it's a catch 22 situation.

It should also be noted that, whilst victims/survivors of human rights violations had more or less similar experiences of the effects of these atrocities, the way they dealt with them varied. In addition, individuals and families came from different backgrounds, socially and economically, so the impact of limited reparations also varied. Some participants showed a marked and profound negative outcome, whilst others tended to rationalise and hope that things would improve. The comment that 'Things are bound to improve' perhaps delayed an inevitable disillusionment with the process.

A further sense of diminution arose from the ways in which reparations were calculated. The original figure of R100,000 was not only reduced to R30,000, but was reduced further in some families where more than one sibling died. In these cases, they only received a total of R30,000 rather than the same amount per family member. This created deep feelings of unfairness amongst participants. Mrs Moya said:

I was initially given R5,000 and thereafter one of R30,000 as directed by the president. I was told that this money was for the 2 daughters who died. I received nothing for my 2 sons who were seriously injured and my husband who died indirectly due to heart problems.

She was clearly upset about this unfair distribution of the money. She said it just felt like a slap in the face. The money did not go far at all, and in the end she just felt abused all over again. Asked how useful the money was, she said:

It came and went. I had to pay the funeral costs of two people. That was not enough at all when you think about all the other debts. Not to mention the destroyed possessions. We had to start afresh by buying essentials such as plates, spoons, pots and pans.

Mrs Bohloko said:

When it was explained to us, it was said that we will get something to 'wipe our tears'. Then I did not realise what they meant by that. It was only when we were told that the R30,000 will be divided between my family and my son's wife 50-50, that I came to understand what 'wiping tears' meant.

Asked what it meant to her specifically she said: 'It meant peanuts.' Like Mrs Moyo above, she said she felt cheated considering that she was an 'indirect' victim and her son was a 'direct' victim and both were members of the ANC. She wondered why she was being treated like a second-class citizen all over again when apartheid was supposed to have been vanquished.

Being told that she had to share what she called 'peanuts' with her daughter-in-law came as a shock and later as a source of confusion for Mrs Bohloko. She could not believe that the TRC/GNU could descend that low. For her, this failure to honour the promised reparations was a disgrace. Having lost a promising young lawyer and a husband who had died indirectly as a result of the atrocity perpetrated on his son, she

felt the TRC's offer of compensation made nonsense of the political struggle. She had lost both a current breadwinner and her son who could have supported the family when he qualified. Like Mrs Moya, she felt terribly betrayed and expressed the view that her disappointment with the TRC and the ANC would remain an unresolved issue – the 'unfinished business' of the TRC. Mrs Bohloko said: 'Money would have been better because it would have helped us to repair our houses, which were riddled with bullet holes after the wars. What could you have done with R15,000? How far does that amount of money go?'

In some situations, compensation from the TRC came through other channels, such as local government. However, this was problematic, as councillors were accused of pocketing the money rather than awarding it to the people for whom it was intended. Mrs Zwane said:

I believe the government, am not too sure, could be the TRC. It set aside funding for compensating all the business people whose businesses were destroyed during the riots. As I was in hospital my compensation money was left with our local councillor but I was never given that money. I received information from reliable sources that my councillor kept the money in his pocket.

Mrs Zwane expressed great anger and displeasure about the treatment she had received from an authority that was supposed to have ensured that her rights were observed. The corruption that was reported, not only within local offices but in the government itself, left a lot of bitterness amongst participants, who believed that by virtue of having sacrificed their lives for the struggle, this kind of treatment was not warranted.

Situations like these deepened the mistrust that victims already harboured as a result of apartheid. Poor people, in most cases, had very little knowledge about resources for redress. Mrs Zwane found herself moving from pillar to post trying to seek advice without any success. She gave up, but remained angry, disillusioned and mistrustful of officials. In the long run, her wellbeing was negatively affected as she reported being homeless and indigent at the time of interview.

Therefore as people pinned their hopes on promises of financial compensation and negotiated their world around these promises, when these hopes were dashed the resulting disappointment and disillusionment increased participants' distrust and discomfiture, and had deleterious effects on people's social and economic wellbeing in the longer term.

### ***Regrets about shacks for homes***

Shacks are informal settlements built out of corrugated-iron material which are susceptible to extreme heat and cold. The establishment of shacks was the result of the apartheid regime's forced removal policies, which included the creation of homelands where blacks were expected to reside. These were very substandard dwellings dotted all over SA, some in urban areas and the ones in rural areas located on land that was difficult to cultivate and long distances from places of work.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, when the ANC recruited its members and latterly when the TRC was created and mandated to deal with human rights violations, participants remembered being encouraged as victims/survivors to testify before it in exchange for certain benefits. Both the ANC and TRC did this by promising to improve victims' socio-economic conditions, offering them good jobs, proper housing, free education and adequate health services. Mrs Landela said:

The TRC said it will provide housing, education, health and jobs for us. One day a woman from the housing department came and took me to a place called Roodekamp, an empty spot where she said, as a victim/survivor, I will be given a plot where my house will be built. Its 12 years ago, I'm still living with my son in a shack.

Living in a shack is the ultimate insult. Practically, it means that people live on top of each other with little room to move. For participants it meant being the lowest of the low with no rights and no public services. Participants were reminded of the recent scandal in the Western Cape, when the authorities provided 'shack' residents with toilets that did not flush, were in the open air and not walled in. This behaviour cemented participants' deeply held suspicions and disbelief at the lack of care and responsibility

exercised towards poor sections of the population. As Mrs Landela emphasised, these issues were continuing 12 years after the promises made by the TRC.

Mrs Thapelo said: 'Yes, the TRC made a lot of promises that included social housing, free and good schools and adequate medical care, even promising to take out private medical insurances for survivors, but not much else has been done.' Clearly she felt that these promises had not been honoured. So dire was her situation that in the interview she later pleaded with me to find her a house.

The perceived sense of betrayal seems to run across all areas of the TRC's functioning, as the comments of Mrs Landela and Mrs Thapelo above illustrate. Mrs Landela said she felt absolutely mortified that the TRC and government could treat people in such an off-hand fashion. She said her trust in the government and its officials had been badly shaken, and that her own self-esteem had been reduced. She had resigned herself to living in substandard conditions. Of the poverty in which she lived, Mrs Landela said:

If it was not because of my aunt, my children and I would be roaming the streets, if she did not help me find a shack in Zonke. Most of the times we survive on cabbage, and even when I have that cabbage half the time I do not have anything to cook it with. I struggled during apartheid, I'm still struggling during freedom. How ironic.

Mrs Landela explained a complex situation involving multiple factors that had led her to be in this terrible position, and how her attempts to seek assistance from the local social services had met with further rebuffs.

Mrs Matola's daughter was killed by the IFP, leaving her with her 5-year-old granddaughter to care for. This granddaughter in turn became pregnant at 18 because of a lack of education, and had a set of twins, but now she was without visible means of support. Mrs Matola complained of her housing situation:

At my age I'm now looking after a granddaughter and great granddaughters. We live with my son who is not very happy with the home situation. He once chucked us out of the house – my house, mind you. He wants my

granddaughter and her twin daughters to leave. I can't get help from anywhere. The TRC and the government has not done anything to accommodate us. I can't give up on my children. It's too painful to even think about it. Where will they go? There are no social services to turn to.

My journal reflected on SA's lack of social security for poor people:

17/05/2010. I left SA some 20 years ago as I felt that it was strange for the SA government to be training social workers to deal with human tragedies when there were no sufficient resources to refer vulnerable people to. SA is one of some countries that do not have a welfare system but the difference is that there is no 'apartheid' in the other countries. One of the crucial roles of social workers is to have sufficient knowledge about available resources in order to be able to refer clients accordingly. Otherwise what did our roles entail? Whilst it was good to engage with vulnerable people in groups and community work, it still did not make sense at all to work with indigent people and not be able to offer tangible and concrete support. Emancipating people to challenge the status quo went hand in hand with being able to force the government to provide much needed and basic services. However, in SA challenging the status quo in that way often meant a prison sentence for most social workers. Providing accommodation is a basic right for needy people and shouldn't be treated as a luxury in democratic societies. Post-apartheid, there has been a lot of hope placed on the new order, the GNU, to redress the weaknesses and failures of the old order, apartheid. Twenty-three years later, maybe it is still early to expect major changes.

Mrs Sello from the Western Cape said: 'The TRC did not do much and now the government has failed. It's not interested in people who suffer more like the apartheid days.' Asked what the government's failures were, she said: 'There are no jobs, especially for young people. Education has not changed much and people have no houses. Look at all these shacks around us. It's disgraceful.'



The failure to provide housing was confirmed by many participants. Mrs Matola had to share a tiny two-roomed house with her son, granddaughter and great-granddaughter; Mr Lesedi had to flee from his home and live in hiding for fear of intimidation and revenge by the IFP members he had helped to prosecute; Mrs Landela lived in a squatter camp with her 11-year-old son; Mrs Zwane said she had decided to live in the forest to escape from enslavement.

Most of these participants had lost their homes due to situations that were outside their control; many had homes destroyed during the wars in the townships and others left their homes for safety reasons. The participants felt that since then, neither the TRC nor the new GNU had done the decent thing of providing homes for the desolate. They all said they felt rejected and abandoned.

Mrs Landela, who said she was taken by a TRC member to view a plot on which her promised house would be built, commented: 'The TRC came and went, and despite its promises, I still have no house. I'm unwell and now where I now live, with my son, you can barely call it a home.' This left Mrs Landela with an on-going feeling of being left to struggle on her own, at 76, having had a complex upbringing and a very problematic relationship with her own mother (now deceased), partially sighted with a partially sighted child, a past history of domestic abuse and no financial support. She said the little hope that she had had at the beginning of the TRC process had been dissipated and that she had been left with an 'empty soul'. Her only hope was that her son would be looked after by someone else when she was no longer alive.

The failure to pay reparations and to improve the socio-economic conditions of survivors therefore resulted in great disappointment and bitterness. The more general failure to honour promises made at the time of the TRC had led many participants to question its value.

### ***Disappointment with substandard education provision***

Since 1954 when the apartheid system introduced a law on education for black South Africans, called 'Bantu education', blacks in SA have been provided with a substandard type of education compared to the earlier provision established by the missionaries. When the TRC started its process, black South Africans waited in anticipation that this policy would change. Most participants were hopeful about two things: that education

would be free for all and that it would be an improved version of what had been offered in the past. Mrs Matola said:

When J from Khulumani came to help us with writing up statements, she told us the TRC has pledged to provide free education for our children. I was particularly keen as my granddaughter needed that support as her mother was no longer there to provide for it and I am not in a position to do that as a pensioner.

Instead her granddaughter did not get an opportunity to attend school and become a mother prematurely. Mrs Matola was quite distressed because she said she had trusted the TRC to deliver as promised. Now her granddaughter had received no education, and had no home and no future to look forward to. She believed that without proper education her granddaughter would never have the opportunity to improve her socio-economic conditions.

Mrs Zolani from the Western Cape felt let down by failed promises of better education for her children:

After my husband was killed by the Boers during one of their raids they undertook at night, I struggled on my own to educate my three children. The government did not help me at all. I felt really let down after all those promises. Fortunately they're grown up now and can support themselves and me.

The absence of fathers, lack of a proper education and daily struggles to make ends meet have subjected many children from poor backgrounds to lives of illness, disadvantage and eventually the commission of crimes. It is regarded as a miracle when children have been able to jump those hurdles and manage to support themselves despite their backgrounds. Mrs Zolani was clearly relieved that her children were now grown up, but she knew very well that the odds had been stacked against them, as she had cared for her children without their father, who would normally have been regarded as the breadwinner.

While some participants managed to obtain some kind of education for their children, most felt badly let down and misled into believing that the TRC would deliver on its promises. They expressed negativity about this lack of achievement, despite taking part in the TRC process. Some reported that they had fulfilled 'their part of the deal' while the TRC had failed to hold up its end.

### ***The challenge of negotiating through inadequate health services***

Similar to its education provision, SA's health services were formerly provided along racial lines, with whites consuming 90 per cent of the country's best health services whilst blacks had an inferior health service.

Participants complained that, despite efforts made during the tenure of the TRC to set up extra support services, especially mental health services, the legacy of apartheid remains in place with patchy, fragmented and inadequate health services. Participants complained about the lack of political will to change their conditions, despite promises made at the time of the TRC.

Mrs Moya commented: 'The ANC and latterly the TRC promised that we would be supplied with free private health insurances but alas we're still forced to access health services from the local clinics.' Asked whether there was a problem with accessing local clinics, she said: 'It's better to see a private doctor even though most people can't afford that.'

*Researcher:* Why can't you access services at a local government clinic?

*Mrs Moya:* Sometimes clinic treatment does not work. It is useless.

*Researcher:* Are you saying they give you tablets that don't work?

*Mrs Moya:* You want to see a doctor but there never is one. Only nurses are there and they can't prescribe some treatments.

This was further elaborated and confirmed by Mrs Thapelo, who complained: 'Often you go to the local clinic and you're told the tablets are finished. They tell you to go back another time. You go another time and still there are no tablets. By that time you're almost dead [laughing]'. Although she was laughing, it was not really a joke. When a person is unwell they want to be seen by a doctor and treated accordingly. It is

humiliating, disrespectful and inconsiderate to be sent back and forth for something that should have been available in the first place. Health should be a fundamental right of all of a country's citizens.

Mrs Bohloko said: 'TRC promised to find doctors so that we could be healed, however this hasn't happened. I'm realising now how ill I have been. At the time of my son's and husband's deaths I was in shock.'

Participants said they felt that this kind of treatment was demeaning for them. They said that poor health services were what they expected from the apartheid regime, but for the TRC and the GNU to treat them this way meant to them that not much had changed. Again, with promises subsequently dishonoured, they reappraised the value of giving testimony.

### ***Regrets about lack of jobs for young people***

As the economy of apartheid SA was built on cheap labour provided by black people, in times of economic crisis blacks would be the first to lose their jobs or would only be able to secure low-paying jobs. In most cases, young people without proper skills would be on the receiving end of the worst disparities. The apartheid regime's lynchpin which was its 'homeland policy', applied via forced removals and demands to produce permits wherever blacks moved. It was designed to remove blacks from urban areas to homelands characterised by arid land, inadequate infrastructure and a lack of jobs. Although this policy was applied ruthlessly to most parts of the country, it gained popularity especially in the Western and Eastern Cape, as illustrated in the previous chapter.

Most participants attributed their struggles to find suitable jobs and maintain a decent living for their families to apartheid's refusal to regard them as human beings worthy of being responsible and accountable for themselves. Mrs Lerato, a great-grandmother, lamented this state of affairs and commented about her grandchildren and great-grandchildren: 'their parents can't find jobs – now they're all dependent on my pension which is meant to be sufficient for me alone ...' She appreciated the government providing a pension for her, but this was not meant to support whole families. She said it was ridiculous to expect her to support her children and grandchildren out of an income that was not even enough for her.

The TRC had promised improved socio-economic conditions and the provision of a 'special pension' on top of old-age pensions, especially for registered ANC members. Whilst older persons did receive their pensions, these have been very paltry; the special pensions would have helped support young people whilst they waited to secure jobs – a provision similar to jobseeker's allowance in the UK. To most participants, their contribution of giving testimony to the TRC had not produced the benefits that were promised. Therefore in their assessment, the TRC did not deliver and their disillusionment remained almost 14 years after testifying.

#### **5.2.4 Suspended hope**

When Mr Mandela was released from prison and later inaugurated, there was euphoria in the country and for many victims/survivors there was tremendous hope for a better life. This hope increased with the creation of the TRC, as most victims believed that the promises of dealing with the after-effects of atrocities could soon become a reality. However, 23 years later not much had changed. The anticipation and hope were experienced by most participants immediately after testifying to the TRC, but then it began to ebb away. Fourteen years after testifying, many participants reported that no one had got back to them to provide information about what was to happen next. Most reported that they had waited patiently to see if something positive would come out of the process. Being fully aware that change can take some time to achieve, they had suspended their hopes. However, by the time of the interviews, there had been very little material improvement.

Most participants expressed disappointment, disillusionment, frustration, confusion and even anger at the failure to deliver. However, some maintained a fading hope for the benefit of the next generations. Mrs Matola symbolised this when she said: 'I hope that something positive will happen for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.' Whilst hope was maintained both by the removal of apartheid and by ongoing trust in a better future for her grandchildren, the statement reflected a kind of fatalism that can sometimes be seen in circumstances where the material reality of poverty and exploitation is rife.

### ***Feeling grateful that apartheid has gone***

Despite the feelings of being betrayed, let down, ignored and lied to, most participants still felt grateful at least that the 'evil system' called apartheid, had been removed from their everyday lives. For Mrs Matola, freedom to move about without harassment was the key. She said: 'Though much has not been achieved we're now able to move about freely ...'

The feeling of freedom alone had given participants hope that maybe – just maybe – improvements might take place in their everyday lives. This was expressed by Ms Sello: 'Freedom of movement, abolition of the pass books and knowing that I'm a legitimate citizen has given me hope that things might change for the better.'

Despite Mrs Matola previously declaring that the TRC and GNU were not interested in people who suffer, there was a time when she felt grateful about some of the positive changes that had happened. She said: 'hopefully my granddaughter and her children will have better opportunities'.

Mr Lamola confirmed the importance of the feeling of liberty: 'It's so much better since apartheid had been abolished. We no longer feel unsafe and insecure – there's no longer government officials chasing people around to produce a "dompas" [permit].'

The feeling of safety and security was very important for most participants, as without that, dealing with other ills of apartheid's legacy – poverty, crime and a sense of alienation – would have taken a much higher toll on their wellbeing.

Mr Vukile agreed with Mr Lamola's opinion, but offered a caveat by saying: 'whilst everybody was pleased with the demise of apartheid, a lot still needed to be done, especially in terms of creating new jobs'. He spoke about how industrialisation and manufacturing were important in ensuring continuity of jobs and consequently improving people's socio-economic conditions.

From the statements above, it appears that survivors from the Western Cape experienced more relief from apartheid's collapse than the Gauteng participants. The reason may be that the atrocities of apartheid were more relentless in the Cape than in Gauteng. For instance, forced removal had stopped in Gauteng since the late 1970s and its frequency had not been as high as in the Cape.

In expressing relief at the end of apartheid, Mrs Lerato concluded: 'We can now sleep in peace without the worry that some white official will be knocking on our doors

rudely and demanding pass books or illegal immigrants.’ Mr Morena confirmed: ‘I now sleep like a baby and I can go anywhere without worrying about a little piece of paper giving me (or not) permission to move about.’ Sleeping ‘like a baby’ conjures up a feeling of relief and carefreeness at not having the burden of carrying a pass-book and having his every movement controlled. Mr Morena said he felt like chains around his ankles had been cut loose and as such he had been set free.

Mr Vukile proclaimed: ‘I felt like it was a new beginning. I felt like I was being reborn.’ To him the dismantling of apartheid seemed like a new dawn and he was feeling on top of the world. Being ‘reborn’ might be interpreted in terms of biblical/religious connotations, but I understood it to mean a fresh start and a desire to undo the wrongs of the past.

### ***Glimmer of hope for grandchildren and great-grand children***

I picked up a sense of resignation amongst the participants I interviewed, as most felt that because they were no longer young, it was unlikely that their own situation would change much. Nonetheless, they still hoped that their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren might be able to stand up to the government and demand better services. It seemed ironic that, whilst black South Africans felt freed from the shackles of apartheid, they still felt trapped in the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Mrs Matola said: ‘I’m too weak and old to fight any more. And I can’t see much change in sight. The struggle is continuing and hopefully the younger generations will take up where we left.’ Whilst Mrs Matola saw signs of hope, she said it was not for her benefit. She seemed to be saying that her chance had passed and she could only hope that the struggles she had been through would not be in vain. She might not have gained much personally through the pain she had endured, but she hoped that the next generation would have a better experience of life in the new SA.

An older man, 82-year-old Mr Motsomotso, said: ‘I understand that the ANC government is new but it needs to focus on poor people – homeless people – create jobs for younger people and help them to improve themselves – money is there ...’

In the long term, despite lingering hopes that something might happen to improve the situation, 14 years after they presented their stories, the future looked bleak for the direct targets of apartheid’s atrocities. Most of the participants were

elderly and believed that they stood no chance of ever transforming their situations. They were no longer of employable age, and life continued to place a heavy toll on their health as a result of the lack of progress in improving socio-economic conditions. This had denied them and young people jobs, and consequently forced older generations to support them financially on meagre state pensions. The on-going poverty in SA is a constant reminder of the failure of the TRC to deliver on its promises, and this has sullied the effectiveness of its processes, tarnished the meaning of participating, and prevented survivors from experiencing healing and realising closure. Yet a glimmer of hope still existed, if not for the participants themselves, then for others.

In hindsight some felt, as Ms Bohlale, Mrs Bohloko and Mrs Tumelo above reasoned, that their stories are now well known and cannot be ignored. In that sense, many felt that their testimony might have done some good in raising awareness of South African society, which means that transformation of this society is possible in the future.

### **5.3. Understanding the core theme of ‘Misrecognition’**

This over-arching theme describes participants’ feeling that they were, in a sense, overlooked in the TRC processes, with many assessing that perpetrators were put in a privileged position over their needs as survivors. Honneth (1996) claims that in the context of social justice, recognition is a fundamental and overarching moral category and the distribution of material goods is a derivative section from this category. Fraser (in Fraser et al., 2004) countered this claim by stating that distribution cannot be subsumed under the category ‘recognition’. She saw redistribution and recognition as equally fundamental and mutually irreducible dimensions of justice, and argued the phrase ‘no recognition without redistribution’ (Fraser 1998; Fraser & Honneth 2003; Fraser & Naples 2004). Both claims are relevant to this core theme of how the survivors of HRVs perceived-themselves as being misrecognised in the TRC process, limiting its effectiveness.

Mr Morena said in the 1<sup>st</sup> findings chapter (Ch5) that he felt ‘Western Cape survivors were an afterthought’. This was because initially the TRC’s mandate did not include the type of the atrocities that Western Cape victims presented with (i.e.



repeated forced removals and pass laws). These atrocities were not recognised as falling within the definition of the Act, i.e. 'gross human rights violations' which had distinguished between 'conflicts of the past' and policies of apartheid'. Policies of apartheid were excluded from being seen as 'crimes against humanity' (Mamdani, 2002: 37).

Mr Mathatha, and many other participants, alluded to this differential or dismissive treatment from the TRC and his party, the ANC, when he said that after suffering severe harm as a result of the conflicts from that period, he felt he had been 'forgotten'. He suggested that 'comrades' who were now occupying high position and leading comfortable lives had forgotten who fought alongside them in the struggle for the liberation. He intimated that they alone were enjoying the fruits of victory. Mr Mathata said he felt unrecognised and his self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence were at low ebb. It seemed that an opportunity for growth and preparatory work had not yet taken place.

Mrs Bohloko expressed similar frustration and anger at the thought that both she and her son were committed members of the ANC, she a chair of the ANC women's league and her son, a human rights lawyer providing legal services for the ANC. She was angry that the TRC hardly prosecuted the perpetrators who were responsible for her son's death and she was not given decent compensation that could have 'wiped her tears'. She said she had lost her husband through the stress that was brought to bear on him due to the death caused to his son. He had been the breadwinner but he died, not a proud man but a very sad human being, stripped off his dignity and self-esteem. Mrs Bohloko appeared to feel not only felt misrecognised but denied her humanness.

Most participants expressed similar feelings about how they were treated by the TRC and the ANC and this resonated with their poor treatment during the apartheid era. Fourteen years post-TRC they felt utterly forgotten. Mrs Mabena from the Western Cape said when she realised that the perpetrator she was waiting to confront all these years had died;

'I feel utterly lost. I'm in the wilderness'.

Mrs Mabena had believed the perpetrator was the only one who was going to corroborate her story, acknowledge and validate it, and in the process recognise her.

This chapter has presented a detailed analysis of the participants' experiences, when looking back and assessing the legacy of their involvement with the TRC many years previously. Certain findings from this chapter and the previous one will be compared to findings of earlier studies in this field and will be further interpreted in the Discussion chapter.

## **Chapter 6      Discussion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I briefly review the motivations discussed in Chapter 4 that led geographically and politically different groups to testify to the TRC. Chapter 5 presented the short-term and long-term legacy of testifying before the TRC, which has not been studied in such depth before. I discuss my findings in relation to studies (reviewed in Chapter 2) which have followed up participants immediately or shortly after giving testimony to the TRC. Finally, I discuss the conceptual issues that emerged from an analysis of emergent themes. These have been selected for deeper exploration in this chapter.

### **6.2 Overview of the findings in Chapters 4 and 5**

As presented in Chapter 4, the findings from Gauteng largely focused on the experiences of participants at the peak of the violence in 1993. They recalled these atrocities as resulting from direct petitioned action to destabilise a country on the brink of transition: for example, the assassination of Chris Hani and violent clashes between the ANC's youth league and the Inkatha Freedom Party. It was these experiences that participants recalled as leading them to testify to the TRC, alongside the promises that they believed the TRC had made to encourage the participants to share their stories. Data from the interviews showed why it is important to study these experiences and demonstrated how vivid these experiences still were in the minds of participants, around 14 years later, mainly due to their unresolved needs.

Chapter 4 showed that the experiences of participants living in the Western Cape differed markedly from those in the Gauteng province. Their experiences involved the apartheid regime's policies of forced removals, which were excluded from the TRC's mandate – a criticism levelled at the TRC by some scholars (Mamdani, 2002; Allan & Allen, 2000; Salazar, 2004; De Vos, 2002; Gibson, 2006; Chapman and Ball, 2008; Pigou, 2001). Leebaw (2009) contends that by downplaying and obfuscating the question of

how apartheid operated as a system, focusing instead on extreme acts of violence committed by individual actors, the TRC failed to investigate the apartheid policy of forced removals which accounted for many more deaths than the abuse it recorded.

The models for the two provinces were placed side by side in Figure 4.1 to highlight the differences in participants' experiences and to show how memorable and meaningful these have been for participants. In addition the model also highlighted the similarities between the two groups. The themes that emerged from these experiences are reflected in the combined grounded theory model for Gauteng and Western Cape experiences, describing the key process that led participants to testify to the TRC.

In Chapter 5, participants reflected on the meanings of giving testimony from their vantage point about 14 years later, and this led to the GTM model presented in Figure 5.1. The first theme of the model, 'unfulfilled promises', had the following subcategories: stated hopes by the ANC/TRC, concerns about speaking out/being heard, being recorded, and finding and burying the dead. This theme does not appear to have been given enough attention by most studies I identified during my literature review. For instance, none of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 mentioned the ANC's promises to its members and/or survivors of human rights violations – including big houses and large swimming pools, better and free education for children, and free medical insurance. These promises were made during ANC recruitment campaigns prior to the TRC and were mentioned again during the creation of the TRC.

Perhaps due to the narrow framework within which the TRC operated, events that took place prior to the 1960s (for example, people's motivations for joining the ANC) were not considered relevant during the period of transition from apartheid. However, for poor people, having had the experience of being denied resources for most of their lives during apartheid, the lack of promised resources resonated with those earlier experiences, when the TRC failed to honour its promises. In other words, there is some historical relevance to this theme. By renegeing on its promises, the TRC reminded survivors of the dismissive manner in which they had been treated for so many years by the apartheid regime, which they now feared the ANC would repeat.

Although participants in the study had all shared their stories to the TRC, and some felt that preparation was given for the event, many felt that they were not properly heard at the time of the TRC hearings. Behind the positive appraisal given to

the healing power of sharing stories, Young (2004) cautioned 'against too glib a celebration of national healing on the back of imagined personal healing' (Young, 2004: 152). She reported that some witnesses found the experience of testifying doubly traumatic. This is confirmed by the experiences of most participants in Chapter 5 of this study. Most claimed that they were unable to manage the emotions of telling their stories, or listen to anything further following their exposure. Most left the packed halls where the hearings were held, feeling more traumatised than before because their wounds had been re-opened but there was no one available to close or bandage them again.

The findings in this study resonate with what Orr, Gobodo-Madikizela and Tutu experienced during the hearings as the TRC commissioners (Orr, 2000; Gobodo-Madikizela, 2004; Tutu, 1999). Therefore the study suggested that the preparation and process used by the TRC did not support the more socially disadvantaged survivors and perpetuated the racial and class divide that existed prior to and during the period of transition.

Contrary to the TRC's popularised slogan that 'Revealing is healing', the study has led me to agree with Hayes (1998: 43) that 'So *just* revealing, is *not* just healing. It depends on *how* we reveal, the *context* of the revealing, and *what it is* that we are revealing.' I would add to this that revealing past traumas also depends on the individual, their personality, social standing, educational levels and other resources. Mrs Landela commented: 'Mandela and Tutu can afford to forgive. Their lives have been vindicated whereas I have nothing – nothing ...'

As much as the TRC's work was publicised in terms of giving voice to the voiceless, it assumed an unproblematic link between 'voice', 'dignity' and being heard (Ross, 2003: 327). Yet participants in this study could not guarantee that they had been recorded, as none had seen the TRC reports when this study was conducted, around 14 after years after they testified.

In contrast to some truth commissions, whose reports were not published or circulated to the public, the South African TRC did publish the final reports, but participants whose stories were reflected in them reported not to have seen the records. The previous TRC studies do not mention any attempt by any organisation to make the reports accessible to the very people without whose stories it would have been

impossible to investigate the causes, nature and extent of the human rights violations. The fact that the TRC did not seem to have taken into account the limitations in general literacy, access to knowledge, resources and entitlement of poor people heightened further its ineffectiveness in the eyes of participants.

Finding and burying the dead was a strong motive for participants in testifying, in response to a promise made by the TRC to assist with such recovery. However, many survivors expressed frustration that they were still waiting to hear about the whereabouts of their deceased loved ones. Studies by Hamber, Nageng and O'Malley (2000), Ross (2003) and Vora and Vora (2004), which researched the effectiveness of the TRC from the perceptions of the different races in SA, did not mention the failure of the TRC process to uncover the dead bodies of direct victims of human rights violations. This failure had a profound impact on participants – an issue that I will explain further in this chapter.

This study has identified that the challenge of managing feelings around forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing was more controversial and more enduring than earlier studies suggested. The studies conducted immediately or shortly after testifying claimed that most survivors had not forgiven the perpetrators (Hamber et al., 2000; Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2001; Kaminer, 2006; Stein et al., 2008; Chapman, 2008). Kaminer's (2006) study showed that forgiveness attitudes were very polarised: that is, people were either forgiving or unforgiving. In Backer's study (2004; discussed in Hamber, 2009), 50 per cent of participants denied forgiving; whilst in Chapman's (2008) study, only 14 per cent of survivors discussed the topic of forgiving, and only 2 per cent expressed unconditional forgiveness. In this current study, many participants said that they had not forgiven their perpetrators, and feelings still appeared raw despite the lengthy passage of time. I discuss the meaning of the coercive rhetoric of 'forgiveness' later in the chapter.

As regards amnesty to perpetrators, most previous studies confirm the controversy and unpopularity of this aspect of the TRC. Various studies conducted nearer the time of the TRC (e.g. Backer, 2010; Hamber, 1998; Hamber, Nageng & O'Malley, 2000; Phakathi & Van der Merwe, 2008) show scepticism amongst victims of human rights violations about the offering of amnesty. Fourteen years after the TRC,

attitudes amongst the participants in this study remained the same: they still feel 'hard done by', that perpetrators did not face justice.

Despite all the hope for healing through truth-telling, a study by Hamber, Nageng and O'Malley (2000) revealed that most participants thought amnesty was unfair; they believed that the process was skewed in that perpetrators received benefits whilst victims received nothing. This was similar to the findings of my study. As with forgiveness, the lengthy passage of time had not softened attitudes towards amnesty.

The study by Hamber et al. (2000) is in many ways similar to this work, except that it was conducted immediately after the TRC concluded its hearing process in 1998 and produced its findings shortly afterwards. It recruited 20 members from the Khulumani support group and investigated some aspects similar to this study, such as how participants felt after testifying, feelings about amnesty, and views about the perpetrators. However, it did not cover the participants' views about healing or experiences that motivated them to testify. This current study illustrates how participants are still locked in a past conflict and that this has not eased since the early studies referred to above, conducted when atrocities were very recent in everyone's experience.

Reconciliation was the end goal of the TRC and, just like forgiveness and truth, was central to its purpose and functioning. However, since the definition of forgiving usually includes the development of a more positive attitude towards the 'other' (McCullough, Root, Tabak & Van Oyen Witvliet, 2009; Staub, Pearlman, Gubin & Hagengimana, 2005; Krog, 2009), reconciliation has been seen as dependent upon forgiveness. To this end, Krog (2009) has tried to link this to interconnectedness-towards-wholeness: that is, the principles of Ubuntu. However, Hamber (2002) argues that during the life of the commission, different actors in and around it often spoke about reconciliation in very different ways, thereby confounding the Commission's aims. It has also never been clearly articulated how reconciliation was to be achieved. Whether linked with forgiving or Ubuntu (Krog, 2009) or with truth (Clark, 2012; Wilson, 2003; and Gibson, 2004), its interpretation remains confusing and confused.

In my study, the concept came across to participants as ambiguous. Participants questioned how reconciliation could be achieved if forgiveness was not given, or how one could reconcile when reparations did not take place. In other words, reconciliation

alone did not make sense to participants and it quite easily became linked with other aspects of the process. Reconciliation was not viewed as a linear process, but was conditional on other aspects of the process. For most participants in the study, their situations, home, health, education and family life have not changed, and on-going hardship has raised questions about whether genuine reconciliation was ever possible. This study considers that the legacy of the TRC testimony-giving process cannot be disentangled from wider socio-economic processes – as on-going hardship contributes to participants' evaluation of the value of giving testimony many years ago.

Alongside my research, only Clark (2012) has conducted a longer-term study of participants involved in the TRC process. Although her research was based on a very small number of interviews with people who gave testimony to the TRC, she found that victims of human rights violations, as opposed to a second set of participants who were not victims, raised ambiguities and disappointments about the effectiveness of the TRC in achieving reconciliation. These disappointments were connected with factors such as the failure of reparations and a lack of improvements in socio-economic conditions. (In contrast, the second group, which was made up of professionals and included a former TRC commissioner, had a more positive perspective on the TRC's effectiveness.) A similar critical perspective on the shortcomings and disappointments of the process was uncovered in my study, the participants in which were all living in harsh socio-economic conditions.

Hayner (2002: 156) reports that a survey released in mid-1998 showed that 'two-thirds of the public believed that revelations resulting from the truth commission process had made South Africans angrier and led to a deterioration in relations between races'. De Vos (2002) argues that, although South Africans may come to judge the commission less harshly in the years to come, such a statistic confirms that, when it was in operation, the TRC was not quite the unifying and nationally cathartic experience its supporters thought it to be. Certainly in my study most participants felt that reconciliation was a distant objective, if it was ever likely to be achieved.

In studies undertaken directly after the TRC (Hamber, 1998; De la Rey & Owens, 1998), some optimism was present, but by the time of my study hope was diminishing amongst some participants. The catharsis that was reported to have taken place following the storytelling had faded with the passage of time.



The third theme in my study relating to the legacy of the TRC is the feeling of being let down by a lack of improvement in participants' socio-economic conditions. Fourteen years after their testimonies to the TRC, victims complained about inadequate compensation, most were still living in shacks, the education system remained substandard for poor people, there were patchy and limited health services in impoverished areas, and there was high unemployment for the young. One of the criticisms levelled against the TRC was its narrow framework, which excluded from its considerations the unequal structure of the apartheid system in dealing with its different nationalities. Such inequalities in the wider society persist, despite participants' earlier trust that they would be removed, and this will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Although several studies have explored attitudes to forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing (e.g. De la Rey and Owens, 1998; Hamber, 1998, 2002, 2009; Hamber, Nageng & O'Malley, 2000; Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2001; Sonis et al., 2002; Picker, 2005; Phakathi & Van der Merwe, 2008; Stein et al., 2008), there is little previous evidence about the disillusionment among victims of human rights violations following the lack of improvement in socio-economic conditions. However, studies of victims of human rights violations have been conducted in other parts of the world, such as the Timor-Leste and Nepal (Robins, 2012, 2013), and East Timor (Jenkins, 2002) which have raised this issue. Laplante (2008: 331) has raised the need for truth commissions to examine 'the socioeconomic root causes of violence in terms of violations of economic, social and cultural rights'.

Chapman & Van der Merwe (2008) are the only South African authors who appear to come close to reviewing the TRC's failure in terms of a lack of improvement in socio-economic conditions. Looking at its achievements, one could argue that the TRC was successful in achieving its overall aim of ensuring a smooth transfer of political power without the bloodshed that some had predicted. However, from participants' perspectives, not much else had changed in their day-to-day lives.

The last theme in my study is described as 'suspended hope'. This came about as a result of victims believing that, once apartheid had been vanquished, their dreams of better things to come would be realised. They initially felt optimistic and trusted that the TRC as well as the government would deliver on their promises. This belief was

expressed immediately after testifying. However, 14 years later they claimed that not much had changed for them. In section 6.6 of this chapter I shall discuss this issue in more detail.

As both Chapters 4 and 5 generated many significant details and categories leading to complex thematic analysis, I have selected a few topics that have not been given enough attention by previous studies of the TRC.

### **6.3 Frozen Grief and social suffering**

In recent years there has been a remarkable proliferation of scholarship throughout the humanities and social sciences focused on the phenomena of mourning and trauma (Moglen, 2005). Recent years have seen many victims of extreme human rights violations, and historians and sociologists are struggling to understand ‘what it might mean to grieve for systematic social injuries and whether there can be a “working through” of traumas that take place on such a monumental scale as the Holocaust or chattels slavery’ (Moglen, 2005: 151) – or, indeed, apartheid SA.

Grief is defined as ‘a particularly sharp, acute feeling of loss that we experience in relation to the loss of a significant person in our lives’ (Green, 2013: 76). Green contends that mourning is a slow and painful process that concludes with a recovery from the acute painfulness of grief. Prolonged mourning can be understood as a prolonged or complicated grief, with both traumatic-distress symptoms and separation-distress symptoms manifested (Enright & Marwit, 2002).

The concept of ‘frozen grief’ has been used to understand long-term responses to ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999, 2010), and many of the participants appeared to manifest this state. Boss describes people who face ambiguous loss, such as uncertainty about whether missing loved ones are dead or alive, as searching endlessly without closure. She explains that situational constraints rather than personal ‘flaws’ may be responsible for ‘freezing’ grief. “Ambiguous loss can cause personal and family problems, not because of flaws in the psyches of those experiencing the loss, but because of situations beyond their control or outside constraints that block the coping and grieving processes” (Boss, 1999; p7). Bittenbinder (1992) reports that the psychotherapist, Marie Langer, speaks of ‘frozen grief’ as the “psychic condition in which someone finds himself who

has suffered hard loss but was forced by circumstances to forego even lamenting it. The grief is then sometimes pushed aside where it slowly poisons both both person and family” (Bittenbinder, 1992: 3 cited from Graessner et al 2001:84). These unresolved external circumstances affected many of the participants.

As in the case of Mrs Tumelo and Tshepo, there are situations where mourning has become complicated, (through circumstances which inhibit/delay morning) and the difficulties created by political disappearances. As long as the family members maintain the belief that their loved ones might still be alive, they cannot begin the process of mourning the permanently lost object through what might also be appropriately referred to as ‘frozen grief’ (Boss 1999, 2010). Such complications include multiple deaths simultaneously or in a short of time as in the cases of Mrs Matola, Mabena, Molemo and Mangena (see Participants profile list). According to Reineman (2011) these losses add additional time to the process of for those who can/do work through the stages of mourning. However in these cases of disappearances of loved ones, reality-testing as described by Freud, in which: ‘Reality –testing has shown that the beloved object no longer exists’ (1917, p. 243), is precluded. Salimovich, et al (1992) cited by Reineman (2011) posit that ‘disappearances are a particularly cruel form of political repression against opposition. They are inconclusive, uncertain, chronically harmful and indefinitely prolonged, painful experiences for the relatives’ (p. 1246). This situation is often exacerbated by relatives being ashamed of admitting to the disappearances or in the case of SA, families being denied support by neighbours as happened in the situation where IFP members barred friends and relatives from visiting and offering condolences to bereaved families. This fear and unpredictability create, as argued by Reineman (2011), high levels of anxiety which severely complicates the mourning process, a situation that can lead to ‘frozen grief’ by Marie Langer (1981), i.e. ‘the mourners do not have a safe space in which they can acknowledge their loss’ (Reineman, 2011, p. 1247). Thus, according to Kijak & Pelento (1986), reality -testing remains suspended for a longer period and this relentless conflictive emotional state traps mourners in a sense of perpetual immobility or what they call ‘special mourning’.

Nonetheless, in many societies, Argentina, Chile and South Africa, for example, those emerging from oppressive regimes have been advised to forget the past, but the arts, having a strong connection with politics, have certainly served as the function of

psychically linking the object to the individuals. Reineman (2011) argues that the importance of the linking object is that 'it symbolises the relationship the individual had with the object and permits her/him to imagine a continued connection in the face of absence' (Reineman, 2011:1249). Whilst the most commonly utilized linking objects in some cultures are clothing and photographs, one victim in the SA TRC kept her son's hair which fell out after he was poisoned by the SA police. However, Khulumani participants seem to keep the memory of the dead by involving themselves in the activities of this organisation as described in the recruitment section of Ch3.2.5. This is in line with what Moglen (2005) has suggested i.e. that subordinate groups may utilise their anger towards emancipation.

Going beyond understanding individual loss reactions, Frost and Hoggett (2008: 447) furthermore posit that 'there is now a history of using concepts of loss, grief and melancholia to understand the experiences of those whose communities are destroyed by processes of urban modernization ... or, more generally, who are the powerless objects of economic and social restructuring'. During apartheid SA, this powerlessness brought about by the fragmentation of communities and the fragmentation of traditions and cultures was the result of forced removals, pass laws and inhuman apartheid policies. These were the experiences that participants in this study emphasised, especially in the Western Cape.

The role of loss has been recognised in the formation of 'subaltern identities', among people with little voice or political representation, far from the élites who write the accepted histories of a people (Gramsci, 2009). Butler (2003: 467) speaks of 'the loss of humanness' under slavery and in other situations where colonised or exiled people's stories are lost from view. This state of being seems to resonate with the loss of Ubuntu in apartheid SA. The loss of Ubuntu is one of the major themes in this study, presented through the Gauteng and the Western Cape experiences.

Melancholia, on the other hand, is described by Freud as 'a pathological form of individual mourning for lost objects, places or ideals' (Eng & Han, 2000: 667). Eng and Han (2000), however, have proposed a concept of melancholia as a depathologised structure of everyday group experience for Asian Americans. For South African blacks during apartheid, I have confined the topic to a state of on-going mourning or frozen grief rather than melancholia. Members of the Khulumani support group specifically

requested that their experiences were not to be seen as pathological. This raises the question of whether there can be a form of grieving that enables victims of oppression to survive and flourish in the wake of their suffering, without forgetting or forgiving the past (Moglen, 2005). Participants in this study were encouraged by the South African TRC to believe that by forgiving their perpetrators, they might obtain emotional and psychological healing and eventually closure. Strangely, the process of grieving is hardly ever mentioned in the TRC reports, or by most empirical studies undertaken. It looks as if there was a general acceptance that testifying to the TRC would produce the desired effects.

Eng and Han (2000) suggest that melancholia might be thought of as underpinning everyday conflicts and struggles with the experiences of immigration, assimilation and racialism, including excessive and on-going oppression such as operated in apartheid SA. Furthermore, they show an interest in group identification rather than individual loss and suffering, which is highly compatible with the loss and suffering experienced by victims of human rights violations in apartheid SA.

Freud's original vocabulary for analysing object-loss has led a number of scholars to be uncomfortable with this conception of mourning. To counteract this perception, Moglen (2005) has suggested that the grieving strategies of subordinated groups can contribute to emancipatory social movements. This appears to reflect what Steven Biko attempted to engage in when he coined the term 'black consciousness movement'. In this sense, Moglen agrees with the politically engaged scholars (Freire, 1998; Fanon, 1969; Biko, 1981; and Hooks, 1990) and further argues that this kind of grieving can be conceptualised as a social form of mourning rather than a type of melancholia.

Van Zyl (1999) interviewed Gillian Straker and asked if psychoanalysis can shed some light on the depth, the scale or the tenacity of violence in human social life. Straker argues that psychoanalysts cannot psychoanalyse culture and history as though they stood outside these experiences. But she suggests: 'because psychoanalytic theories have addressed the intensity and evolution of deep hatreds and deep loves, sadism and destructiveness alongside hope and generativity in human character, perhaps we can and should contribute to political dialogues' (Van Zyl, 1999: 246).

Moglen (2005) argues against those who champion the grieving process of the oppressed as 'melancholic', as they tend to ignore the self-destructive dimension of the

psychic phenomenon that melancholia has sought to name. He posits that because of its extremity and unconsciousness, melancholia is precisely and above all a form of grieving that compounds the pain of loss by inflicting further pain upon the self, and this self-beratement can even lead to suicide. In other words, the 'melancholic' tends to turn their anger inwardly or on themselves, whereas a subordinate group can use this anger towards emancipating themselves. Much as participants in this study appear to be 'stuck' or 'frozen' in their grief, I do not believe that the issue of melancholia as understood by Freud applies to them with its elements of unconsciousness and intractability. Most are very conscious of the effects of their emotional and social environment and are currently members of an NGO, Khulumani, which is helping them to work together to resolve some of their unmet needs: in other words, as Moglen suggests, the anger they have towards both the GNU and the TRC is channelled towards self-reliance programmes which will eventually, they hope, lead to the goal of emancipation.

Durrant (2005), analysing the work of South African authors who sought to write stories of the new SA (e.g. Zakes Mda, John Kani, J. M. Coetzee and Ingrid de Kok), argues that post-apartheid literature invented new forms of mourning and community, offering alternative times and spaces for the expression of grief. For instance, in the past, funerals and associated rites of mourning were often thought of as one of the most traditional ties of community, providing an opportunity for members of the community to come together united in the common purpose of remembering the dead and ensuring their passage to the next world. However, funerals during the apartheid era were often politicised and many political chants were also songs of mourning commemorating the dead or imprisoned heroes of the struggle. Therefore in Zakes Mda's *Ways of dying*, the sheer volume of death in government-sponsored 'inter-tribal' violence of the early 1990s led some to reinvent themselves as 'professional mourners' (Durrant, 2005): that is, their job is to mourn on behalf of others.

Gillian Straker (a white South African psychoanalyst interviewed by Van Zyl, 1999) posits that what has emerged from the TRC process is an effort at forgiveness and reconciliation that has made some people wonder about the processes, possibilities and limits of what Melanie Klein called 'reparation'. For this notion to be understood, the place to begin is the infant's relation to the mother's breast, which creates conflicts

within the baby's psyche. In this ambivalent relation to the mother, the infant comes to view the breast as both and irreconcilably an all-good nurturing object of love and an all-bad persecutory object of deprivation (Segal, 1988). As the child moves beyond a split position, thinking of good or bad, to consider that both are held within the same 'object' (that of the mother), they enter into the 'depressive position'. This creates a guilt structure which involves the power of the unconscious to repair in phantasy what it has destroyed in phantasy. This is said to be a fundamental idea in Klein's concept of reparation.

Straker contends that what SA has set up is a process in which the private suffering of the victims/survivors can be made public. In theory, this would allow for setting up the possibility of public reconciliation in cases where a 'depressive position' response has occurred in the perpetrator, who no longer shrinks 'from the pain associated with recognition of the pain he has intentionally inflicted' (Van Zyl, 1999: 247). It has been argued that it was always complex to trace the psychological effects from the level of the individual to the social. What could it mean to think of a country moving from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position, and as Moglen (2005) argued, how does the public ritual in reconciliation and forgiveness become part of the social and intra-psychic fabric (Van Zyl, 1999)?

Nicholls (2006) argues that if a person is able to move towards a depressive position, they are able to tolerate feelings of guilt and experience remorse, and this can allow them to take responsibility. Nicholls distinguished 'this process as leading from a feeling of guilt (persecutory) to the feelings of culpability (taking responsibility) which result in their ability to consider actions (real and symbolic) that repair or restore the other' (Nicholls, 2006: 163). However, in the case of the South African TRC, the perpetrators may have confessed their atrocities, but it is unclear if they expressed guilt or showed remorse, and they were not expected to ask for forgiveness. These processes were held separately from the victims' testimonies and so little relationship or connectedness occurred. The participants in this study did not believe that perpetrators had taken any responsibility for right the wrongs they had committed, real or symbolic.

Humphrey (2003), from an anthropological view, confirms and elaborates on the ritual structure of the truth commissions being triadic, involving the victim, the witnessing public and the commission. He argues that the process of the truth

commissions was intended to be socially inclusive in both the method of their establishment and the reception and recognition of victims (Humphrey, 2003: 176). However, participants in this study did not feel particularly recognised. This issue was explored in the previous chapter, within the theme of 'ambivalence and misrecognition', as reparative work is not obvious.

In summary, I have looked at how social suffering has been understood from a psychoanalytic perspective and I will now highlight how the different authors mentioned in this section propose strategies to deal with this phenomenon.

Moglen (2005), for instance, suggests that when private mourning is able to proceed fully, one opens to the possibility of new attachment. 'In the case of social mourning an injured portion of a society is able once again to imagine the possible flourishing of capabilities in themselves that have been denied by the social structures within which they live' (Moglen, 2005: 163).

Segal (1988) suggests that the acceptance of psychic reality involves the renunciation of omnipotence and magic, lessening of splitting and withdrawal of projective identification. This acceptance of the idea of separateness, she claims, is part of reparation that allows one's objects to be free, loving one another. Nicholls (2006), on the other hand, suggests that it is in the depressive position that the person is able to experience reparative wishes and thereby engage in reparative actions, the simplest of which may be to ask for and to offer forgiveness.

Eng and Han (2000) suggest that reparative work on unresolved processes requires a public language, and a public space in which these conflicts can be acknowledged, negotiated and recognised. In a sense this did take place in the South African TRC hearings, but it did not necessarily lead to full acknowledgment, negotiation and recognition.

The suggestion that makes most sense in the post-apartheid context in the immediate term, and which resonates with my participants' experiences, has been made by Galatzer-Levy (2007). He provides a perspective on slave reparations in America, from a Kleinian psychoanalysis perspective and drawing on the work of Fanon, identifying a primary aggressive guilt structure. The argument that proceeds from this structure is that there is a good reason to believe that the payment of reparation will allow for the



engagement of white guilt, such that the aggressive manifestation may be alleviated, allowing for meaningful mourning and healing.

It was shown in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study that participants were aggrieved by the fact that perpetrators had been let 'off the hook', and they demanded financial reparation for the losses they had suffered. They continued to pursue this demand through the lawsuit against multinational companies, taken out on their behalf by the Khulumani support group, and this may be a strategy that can be interpreted as perhaps ultimately unlocking or 'thawing' their state of frozen grief. In line with this, from studies of atrocities perpetrated by the oppressive regimes in Latin America, Hollander (1996) argues that following upon classical studies of concentration camp behaviour by psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, much has been written about the fact that individuals with a history of political consciousness and commitment are better prepared than those with no political awareness and sophistication to withstand the multiple levels of paradox and confusion induced by the torture experience. However there was a difference in the way men and women responded to such traumatic experiences. For example, Hollander posits that a study by a team of mental health professionals in Chile, on the psychological effects on families that had had one or more of their members abducted and tortured suggested that as a result of such experience the families lived fearfully and in isolation, their members having little opportunity to work through the sequelae of the traumatic event (Hollander, 1996). The study pointed out that in many cases the family ties were broken under the stress, with the formation of new couple relationships and new familial nuclei. However investigators observed that the inability to psychologically elaborate the torture experience was more marked among the men than women and that the most frequently noted behaviour amongst fathers was introversion, isolation, emotional armour and psychological absence in relation to other family members. For example the men were inclined to express rage and rigidity in situations that demanded flexibility and dialogue. In contrast the mothers, and women in general, seemed to have more internal resources that permitted psychological elaboration of the trauma. This was evident with the women of Khulumani who have been able to withstand and work through the trauma firstly, of their sons and daughters who were abducted, and tortured and secondly, murdered during the upheavals. Even though women ended up with some psychological and physical ailments such as heart

problems, which are natural responses to traumatic experiences, men were reported to have mostly died as a result. Most women have been able to elaborate on these experiences and most formed part of taking the struggle forward by having joined Khulumani Support Group for that purpose.

Hollander (1996) posits that in spite of all attempts by the terrorist states to eliminate political opposition and paralyse dissent and in spite of the profound traumatic impact of their policies, there are the multiple examples in Latin America to indicate that even in the environment of extreme political repression, some women and men retain the capacity to fight for a society that honours human rights and social justice. This may help people move on from, or use grief, to achieve positive ends. She contends that from Chile, Argentina, El Salvador to Guatemala, mothers' and grandmothers' 'organisations sprouted like flowers in a deadly drought to uphold the value of life and to demand the reappearance of the hundreds and thousands of sons, daughters and grandchildren disappeared at the hands of the military dictatorships dominating the continent' (Hollander, 1996:71). For instance in the case of Argentina, the Mothers & Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo were the first organised visible opposition to the terrorist state during that country's 'Dirty War'. The women who became activists in the struggle to denounce the military's gross human rights violations and to demand the return of their disappeared loved ones came from diverse backgrounds, i.e. political activists, middle class professionals, working class women with no political experience and home makers with no political activity in the public realm. The thread that binds them was their profound commitment to their children and grandchildren and their unwavering refusal to accept passively their disappearance (and torture and murder) perpetrated by an illegitimate government. On behalf of their loved ones they tenaciously fought the terrorist state at tremendous risk to their own lives (Hollander, 1996). This participation in these organisations has been clear in demonstrating the extraordinary positive effect it had on these women. Mental health professionals who have assisted the Mothers & Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo argued described the value of these Mothers & Grandmothers as their refusal to accept the terms of the terrorist state, their articulation of the existence of a responsible party that has 'disappeared' their children and a demand of an accounting from those responsible. One of their slogans symbolise this posture: 'Punishment to Culprits'. In their coming

together to act, these women have given up the narcissistic dyad 'I and my son/ I and my grandchild' in the interest of the common concerns for all the disappeared children and grandchildren (Hollander 1996:73). They do not seek revenge; their action is beyond the realm of retaliation. Similar to Khulumani participants and El Salvadorian women, they demand the return of Law and its ability to contain arbitrariness within the social order. Hollander (1996) posits that women who had previously spent their lives going 'from the grinding stone to the well' (p.73) became activists fighting for their rights, confronting the army and often winning. As in Argentina when they hold up the posters with photographs identifying their disappeared children, the Salvadoran mothers refuse to accept death and an end to life and refuse to let their daughters and sons remain anonymous 'subversives' or 'terrorists' (Hollander, 1996, p.74).

In South Africa, victims of human rights violations, some of whom have been members, and others having joined Khulumani following their disappointment with the TRC's effectiveness to keep its promises, are involved in several projects by way of continuing to take up the struggle for emancipation. In the SA context, even though women are in the majority, men are also very active in the running of the organisation. The group believes that the 'unfinished business' of the TRC as a result of the incomplete, inadequate and delayed reparations, remains unaddressed, entrenching the exclusion of the dispossessed and deliberately disempowered. Their evaluation of the effectiveness of the TRC from their perspective highlights the partial truth, failure of justice and incomplete transformation, and this has led to members taking matters in their own hands by involving in critical campaigns such as: taking out litigation tort (reparations lawsuits claiming damages) against all multinational companies that traded with apartheid SA despite international sanctions imposed on the country for its human rights abuses; openly condemning the genocide towards foreigners and the Marikana massacre; post-TRC focused projects such as lobbying and advocacy for community reparations programmes; the pursuit of prosecutions of these perpetrators who failed to apply for amnesty and efforts to resolve cases of the disappeared; livelihood skills development projects to assist survivors to become mainstreamed into community development activities at local municipality level; facilitated programmes in healing and memorialisation and educational outreach to schools in particular through the use of the performing arts.

In addition, Khulumani members continue to campaign for the government to compensate victims from the President's Fund set up on the instructions of the TRC. More or less in line with Fraser's (2003) framework of recognition and slogan ('No recognition without redistribution'), their motto is 'No reconciliation without truth, reparations and redress' (taken from Khulumani.net).

Hollander (1996) argues that these examples are some of the many ways women (and men) organise to struggle against the terrorist state and shed light on the relationship between political resistance and mental health. Such individuals have been able to work through the traumatic loss of loved ones (and communities) in part because for them their activist group has become a new privileged object, and they have been able to give a new meaning to group links beyond the family. Hollander contends that 'the struggle for peace and justice means another type of relationship with the object----[and] the ego ideal system has been altered: to be a mother (Grandmother) now means 'to fight for all our children' or 'to fight for life' (1996:74). Mental health professionals who have worked with these mothers' and grandmothers' organizations relate that these activist women tended as a group to be more able to elaborate the trauma they suffered and to deal with the general impact of state terror. This experience is therefore likely to be healing precisely because the individual who has known traumatic loss is no longer cut off from the group. 'Their loss is no longer individualised, detached from its historical context and from the collective process but is now part of the political struggle which produced it and can now potentiate its reparation' (Hollander, 1996:74).

A study by Brounéus (2008) in Rwanda, which shares some similarities with my own study, provides a good example of the type of support that victims of such atrocities can be given. The findings of this Rwandan study and my own indicate that culturally appropriate support is needed for survivors before, during and after the proceedings. Nonetheless, I still do not think that truth commissions are appropriate for providing this type of support – even in the case of the South African TRC, which had been well resourced – mainly because they are short-term transitions and are not made to deal with long-term psychosocial interventions. This will be explored in the concluding chapter as part of the study's implication for practice.

### 6.3.1 Declining to forgive in the long term

In this section I highlight how these social and cultural losses impacted on victims' psyches and the social aspects of their lives.

A few studies of the South African TRC have demonstrated how most victims/survivors resisted forgiving perpetrators of human rights violations (Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2001; Sonis et al., 2002; Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004; Stein et al., 2008; Chapman, 2008). Whilst forgiving has been hailed as fundamental to mental wellbeing and as facilitating healing, there are other studies (e.g. Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004) that have pointed to the danger of forcing victims to forgive when they felt that it was not their place to forgive on behalf of the deceased. Whilst these earlier studies indicated some level of offering of forgiveness by a minority of victims, results of later studies (e.g. Clark, 2012) have revealed an increasing reluctance to forgive. The most obvious reason could be that victims decided to change their perception of forgiveness following the failure by the TRC and latterly by the government to deliver on its promises. Moosa et al. (2004) argue that the basic premise of forgiveness is a desirable objective for individuals, as it acts as a catalyst for peace, both personal and interpersonal. However, they also believe that forgiveness is not an absolute and that when individuals or groups find, in good faith, that they are unable to forgive those who have wronged them, their choice not to forgive is no less worthy of respect.

Whilst some participants might have been influenced by the example set by Mandela and Tutu, looking at most studies undertaken immediately after the TRC closed its doors and the few undertaken long after (Clark, 2012), there are not many people who forgave unconditionally, especially when perpetrators were not encouraged to show remorse. Studies have also revealed that the willingness to forgive is based on factors such as individual 'material conditions, social standing and their related sense of efficacy in the world' (Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004: 221). Many expect to be recompensed for the suffering caused to them.

However, as Moosa et al. (2004) noted, for political activists especially, the choice to forgive or not had a political currency as well, so that forgiveness functioned almost like a commodity; thus conferring forgiveness was experienced as generating political advantage or disadvantage for the individual. As most participants in my study

were older and because communities were already fragmented, this issue has not come up clearly, but I suspect that 'black on black' violence could have been the result of communities feeling suspicious of one another, as some were accused of 'spying'.

Another factor that has created the dilemma of forgiveness has been vicarious forgiveness, as mentioned in Chapter 2. This involves some reference to community expectations and cultural beliefs. Most political activists believed that it was incumbent on them to observe the customs of their culture, which necessitated the exacting of vengeance (Moosa, Straker & Eagle, 2004). Contrary to the notion of vicarious forgiveness is also the issue of survivors not being willing to forgive on behalf of the deceased, as in the case of Primo Levi (Nicholls, 2006), who not only categorically refused to forgive the Nazis for what they had done, but also refused to forgive on behalf of the deceased because he was concerned that a revisionist history would be written of the events of the Second World War. This also applies to the genocide in Rwanda, where the president believed that some crimes were too horrendous to forgive (Graybill, 2001). Many of the participants in my study refused to forgive for all sorts of reasons, but what came to the fore was that many promises had been made to them, including monetary reparations, which had not been honoured during the 14 years following testimony.

In support of the suggestion made by Moosa et al. (2004) that forgiveness is a complex notion in which there are no right or wrong answers, and that it might not be wrong if victims choose not to forgive, Murphy (2003) agrees that individuals who choose not to forgive should not be morally judged. Several of the participants in this current study voiced their reluctance to forgive based on the grounds that perpetrators did not ask for forgiveness and did not show remorse.

The atrocities perpetrated by the IFP, especially in the areas of the East Rand in Gauteng, as reported by the participants in my study, are unimaginable. The hacking to death of women and children whilst asleep is a horror that no one can imagine, and forgiveness in such circumstances seems unlikely to be given.

The emphasis on forgiveness is also influenced by the work of the TRC, which has put the notion centre stage. As forgiveness was the most important part of the Commission's mandate, it is important to highlight what might be the long-term impact on victims, who were expected to forgive perpetrators (but did not), as part of a deal

that would ensure reconciliation and peaceful co-existence in the country. I am fully aware that at this stage it might not be a good idea to portray survivors' experiences in a pathological manner; however, I also believe that it is important to obtain different views about how these problems can be tackled. After all, we are dealing with the aftermath of trauma that in some cases might require psychological intervention – at least, in a theoretical sense.

Kaminer et al.'s (2001) study with psychiatric patients did not reveal any change in their condition, whether they forgave or not. In other words, forgiveness had no impact on the participants' condition. However, in my study most victims who declined to forgive also disagreed with the award of amnesty and reported not having healed. This is the case especially where disappeared bodies had not been recovered. Victims/survivors remained in a state of mourning with no end in sight and the concern is that this mourning may continue until it turns into melancholia, in which case it will have detrimental consequences for victims/survivors and ultimately become difficult to heal.

### **6.3.2 Personal impact of the inability to bury the dead**

This section is very closely linked to the previous section, as the inability to bury the dead can lead to prolonged mourning, which may be detrimental to the wellbeing of victims in the long term.

One of the stated aims of the South African TRC mandate and promises made to survivors was to uncover the whereabouts of the deceased, to enable them to be buried with respect and dignity. Fourteen years after the TRC ended, presenting its final report to President Mandela in 2000, some of the disappeared had still not been found and consequently had not been buried with any formal ceremony. Participants in my study still expressed regret at not finding the whereabouts of loved ones, and this contributed to experiences of 'feeling stuck', as shown in the grounded theory analysis in Chapter 4.

Participants reported 'holding empty coffins'. Others reported being in 'perpetual mourning'. The studies conducted immediately after victims testified did not emphasise this issue. I can only assume that at the time of these studies most victims/survivors still entertained hopes that the TRC was going to deliver on its promises. The prolonged

regret that affected many participants even 14 years after giving their testimony is a new finding from this study.

Burying the dead is a very sensitive and significant ritual in most cultures. In the African culture of South Africa it is a form of ritual that has a special place in the lives of black people (Mda, 1995). Families go out of their way to ensure that a person's burial is marked as a special event in the lives of all those remaining. It is believed that for one's soul to be at home and also to be united at burial with the mortal remains is important for spiritual harmony to be attained. Participants expressed a need to bury their loved ones appropriately. Non-fulfilment of this procedure is feared to lead to the spirit wandering restlessly and causing misfortune to family members as it expresses displeasure.

In African societies, death is perceived as the beginning of a person's relationship with all of creation, the contemplating of life and the beginning of communication between the visible and the invisible worlds (Berglund, 1976). The goal of life is to become an ancestor after death. It might be argued that 'proper' death rites are more to guarantee protection for the living than to secure a safe passage for the dying. Others believe that there is great ambivalence about attitudes to the dead, which fluctuates between love and respect on the one hand and dread and despair on the other, particularly because it is believed that the dead have power over the living (Berglund, 1976).

Thus it is no wonder that all those participants in my study who have not been able to locate the bodies of their loved ones, and consequently have not been able to carry out the ritualistic ceremonies of burial, are disaffected by the TRC's failure to help locate the whereabouts of these bodies. Some families consider that any misfortunes in the family may be attributed to the failure to bury the dead. For example, Mrs Tumelo blamed all other subsequent family deaths on the failure to bury her husband, who had died as a victim of apartheid's atrocities.

The only mother of the 'Mofolo 3' who was able to forgive had found where her son's body was located, buried in a mass grave. She claimed that, as she had had a proper burial for her son, she had been able to move on in life.

These cases suggest that the propensity to forgive is influenced by improvements in other areas of life, such as respect for burial customs according to their own culture,



and further emphasise that forgiveness cannot stand alone. Even though there are instances where people may proffer forgiveness purely unconditionally, in most instances other aspects of a person's life influence whether an individual can be confident that their forgiveness is based purely on empathy, compassion and loving-kindness to another (Ame & Alidu, 2010; Gobodo-Madikizela, 2004). My view is that, although this failure to uncover the truth, including the whereabouts of the deceased, has been pointed out before, insufficient attention has been given to the impact that it has had on survivors, especially from a cultural point of view in the longer term. Though offering mainly practical support to survivors, the Khulumani support organisation and others in the country have attempted to address this need amongst survivors by setting up workshops and forums not only where this issue could be discussed, but where efforts could be made to investigate disappearances. Khulumani has set up a database of those who disappeared during the upheavals and brutal violations by the apartheid regime and has recorded around 6,800 disappeared victims, mostly young men (Khulumani Annual Report, 2012–13). My study has shown that, despite the lapse of many years, these issues continue to distress survivors who gave testimony, and have resulted in survivors continuing to question the efficacy of the TRC process.

In summary, the failure by the TRC to uncover and assist victims/survivors to bury their loved ones has been highlighted and confirmed by some survivors in this study as a serious stumbling block to their ability to move on, heal and realise closure. Denying participants of this study the chance to bury their loved ones in a respectful and dignified manner in accordance with traditional practices, whether traditional or reinvented, is a denial of a basic right and adds another layer of betrayal on top of others before it. There needs to be better recognition within SA society that the TRC was not able to fulfil these promises, in relation to locating the disappeared and enabling dignified burial ceremonies.

#### **6.4 Remaining the poorest of the poor**

This section deals with the lack of improved socio-economic conditions as promised by the TRC, linking it with the TRC's failure to deal sufficiently with apartheid's legacy, thus failing to acknowledge participants' economic needs created under the apartheid state.

One of the most serious flaws of the TRC in SA has been the narrow framework under which it operated between its inception in 1995 and the submission of its final report in 2000. This framework excluded the historical impact of apartheid policies on the day-to-day lives of the black population, who were excluded from participating in the political and economic life of the country as equals to the white population.

Mamdani (2005) argues that by focusing on individuals and obscuring the victimisation of communities, the TRC was unable to highlight the bifurcated nature of apartheid as a form of power that governed natives differently from non-natives. Thus the TRC failed even to recommend reforms that would put in place a single unitary regime for all South Africans in a post-apartheid South Africa (Mamdani, 2005: 34).

Looking at the participants' views on their socio-economic conditions reveals that there was no economic justice for victims of human rights violations, let alone for the black population as a whole. However, Chapman and Van der Merwe (2008) argue that the TRC was not set up to address directly the economic injustices of the past. It was mandated to deal with a narrow definition of offences. Its focus on the 'gross' human rights violations obscured the fundamental nature and wide scope of apartheid abuses. Depicting all those who appeared before it to testify and share their stories as victims of human rights violations denied millions of oppressed suffering black people of their right of redress and 'characterised them as victims of unfortunate circumstances' (Van der Merwe & Chapman, 2008: 273).

By excluding policies of apartheid from its mandate, the TRC managed to attract critical comments from disaffected groups which claimed that the recommendations did not go far enough to include day-to-day sufferings of poor people, mainly black people, under a racist and discriminatory system. In so doing, the TRC extended impunity to most perpetrators of apartheid, as in the absence of a full acknowledgement of victims of apartheid there could not be a complete identification of its perpetrators. Many victims felt as a consequence that the TRC prioritised perpetrators' needs at the expense of victims' needs (Hamber, Nageng & O'Malley, 2000; Mamdani, 2002).

Humphrey (2003) concludes that the ANC strongly objected to the way in which the TRC Reports (Tutu, 1998a,b) placed the abuses of the apartheid regime and opposition groups on the same level in what the TRC called 'even-handedness', which tended to obscure the historical origins of apartheid in colonial rule and a racist division

of labour. Whilst the TRC has received worldwide applause from its proponents, the on-going socio-economic hardship among this study's participants seemed to increase disillusionment with the achievements of the TRC and the effectiveness of their own testimony. Although those who were of pensionable ages received state pensions, others who had not reached 60 were left without an income and most were unable to secure jobs. Most tried several times but failed to secure the special pensions provided by the ANC for its members. This lack of access to financial support added another layer of disappointment and betrayal at the process.

Chapter 5 of this study highlighted the unchanged conditions of poor people post-TRC and 16 years after the establishment of democracy. Most survivors continued to live in substandard housing; and there were repeated concerns about lack of jobs, limited medical services and poor educational facilities for their children and grandchildren. Laplante (2008) proposes that commissions should expand their mandates to include a legal framework that examines the socio-economic root causes of violence in terms of violations of economic, social and cultural rights. According to Laplante, this approach would help increase the compulsion felt by states to redress these conditions, and at the same time would provide local actors with a legitimate platform to lobby for solutions to their grievances. In SA some groups that support victims, such as the Khulumani, have taken on the role of lobbying government to redress these issues, especially in terms of reparations.

Laplante (2008) argues that if the underlying socio-economic structures that led to violence are not addressed, sustainable peace will remain beyond our reach. Her views resonate with the findings of this study, that the meaning of giving testimony may be negatively affected in the long term by on-going socioeconomic hardship, and cannot be judged solely by the immediate achievement of personal catharsis, forgiveness or psychological healing during the commission process itself. These findings emerged from interviewing participants living in very poor socio-economic circumstances – a group that has had limited attention in previous research studies.

Along similar lines, the truth commission in Timor-Leste, led by the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR), articulated a claim that is standard for such bodies: that its truth-telling role would be healing for victims (Robins, 2012). Although Robins suggests that CAVR was not well known by victims and had little impact

on their lives, just like participants in both Gauteng and the Western Cape, victims emphasised the need for economic support and appropriate treatment of the missing and the dead (Robins, 2012). In Robins' study there was a lot of emphasis on economic improvements in the lives of victims, who were usually the poorest of the poor. The author posits that Timor-Leste is a poor and predominantly rural state in which most people earn a subsistence livelihood and 42 per cent live below the poverty line. Like SA, it has had a long history of gross and systematic human rights violations dating back at least to the illegal Indonesian occupation of East Timor in 1974 (Jenkins, 2002).

Even with trials and reparation programmes, if the overall economic and social inequalities go unaddressed and the grievances of the poor and the marginalised go unheard, we are left with only uncertain guarantees of non-repetition. 'It is like treating the symptoms while leaving the underlying illness to fester' (Laplante, 2008: 332). Despite the South African TRC's seemingly overwhelming success, the government's failure to improve on the socio-economic conditions of poor people, and inability to narrow the gap between the well-off and the poor, has diminished its positive work in the eyes of the victims whom it was supposed to acknowledge and validate. This lack of improved socio-economic conditions is of fundamental importance because without it what the TRC aimed for, psychological healing, has not been achieved.

Several suggestions have been made by different scholars and studies regarding this particular issue (Minow, 1998; Chapman & Van der Merwe, 2008; Hamber 2009; Van der Merwe, Baxter & Chapman, 2009). Hamber (2009) asserts that although socio-economic inequalities are a legacy of apartheid, since its inception the ANC has been attempting to redress this. Yet there is growing resentment about the multifaceted layers of inequality emerging in SA. The 'poorest of the poor' are witnessing the socio-economic conditions of fellow ANC members and middle-class blacks improving at an unprecedented rate, whilst their own living conditions remain harsh.

Chapman and Van der Merwe (2008) argue that, although the TRC recognised the need to address the broader socio-economic and institutional elements inherent in its mandate, it relied largely on a simplistic moral condemnation of apartheid as a basis for understanding and overcoming its legacy, and fundamentally treated this problem as a moral one rather than as a socio-economic system that intentionally divided people in terms of their access to resources. Mamdani (2002) and Bundy (2001) argue forcefully

that the TRC was established as a mechanism to entrench the unequal status quo between black and white, allowing the beneficiaries of apartheid to distance themselves from its worst excesses whilst continuing to enjoy its benefits (Chapman and van der Merwe, 2008).

In the longer term, my study has shown that people have become rather disillusioned with the effectiveness of the testimony-giving process, as their lives have not changed for the better, despite hopes that it would do so. This is shown by their initial motivations to give testimony (Chapter 4). Although some authors have commented that the TRC mandate did not include attention to broader socio-economic conditions, my participants believed that promises were made to improve their lives via monetary compensation and better housing, education and health provisions.

## **6.5 'Black on black' violence**

In this section I show how participants viewed atrocities perpetrated against them by their own people and the impact this had on them.

When the TRC issued its report in 1998, it was sharply critiqued by leaders of the major parties to the constitutional pact: namely, the NP and ANC. For the TRC, however, this was proof enough that its report was not only non-partisan but also non-political.

The TRC's statistical analysis of violations reported that most violations described by deponents took place in the period after the unbanning of political parties (1990–4), followed by the years during the state of emergency (1983–9) (Tutu et al., 1998a). Roughly half of all violations recorded by the commission occurred during the period of transition, 35 per cent at the height of the popular struggles against apartheid, but only 15 per cent in the 'heyday' of apartheid, meaning that 'crimes against humanity' took place not when apartheid was implemented but when it was challenged. Against this background there are questions about describing apartheid itself as a 'crime against humanity' (Mamdani, 2002: 36).

The report also showed that the IFP was the primary perpetrator in the number of violations dominating the graph, with the SAP and ANC showing the second and third highest numbers of alleged violations. Trying to understand this, Mamdani (2002) suggests that it looks like most perpetrators of apartheid were black.

There have always been rivalries amongst the different liberation movements (ANC vs Pan African Congress, for instance), but the most volatile rivalry has been between the ANC and the IFP. This became ferocious during the conflicts surrounding the declaration of a state of emergency. It is been known that the IFP was instigated, supported and armed by the apartheid state to wage a war with the ANC and this became heightened during the assassination of Chris Hani, head of the ANC's MK (its armed wing).

Most participants were aware of this infiltration by the apartheid insurgences in the ranks of the IFP. However, what they could not understand and reconcile with is how the IFP allowed itself to be used in that manner. Why the apartheid system sought to use the IFP for its 'dirty' war, as described by the participants, did not seem to matter. What the participants, mostly ANC members, said was that the violence that had been expected from white South Africans was far more shocking and disorientating when coming from black members of the community.

Melkote (1993) posited that 'a regime founded on racial segregation could only have survived by the use of force and not democratic consent'. Thus for generations of black South Africans, 'hatred and violence have become part of daily existence' (Melkote, 1993: 1148). As violence continued in SA (post-apartheid), it was as a 'blacks against blacks' phenomenon, the connotation being 'the incapacity of blacks to govern themselves' (Melkote, 1993: 1148).

Most participants of this study expressed shock at the manner in which the IFP, in its quest to eliminate ANC members, had massacred innocent individuals, including women and children. They claimed that the heinous acts defied comprehension and ruptured the senses (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2004). Some of the findings from Gauteng and Western Cape highlight these events clearly. In Gauteng, families including children were massacred with machetes and guns whilst they were sleeping, and in the Western Cape the apartheid machinery, with black police officers leading the way, chased families out of their homes, shamboking them and in the process killing hundreds of people. Whilst Orr (2000) claimed that listening to the traumatic stories was overwhelming, Tutu (1999) said that nothing could have prepared him for some of the horrendous crimes and acts of violence and torture he heard about from victims, or from perpetrators seeking amnesty.

Melkote (1993) reports that even after the lifting of the ban on the ANC in February 1990, the dirty tricks operation went on from May through to December 1991. The Bisho and Boipatong massacres revealed the connivance of the South African regime in perpetuating what conveniently seen as 'black and black' violence.

Following the state of emergency declaration in 1985, which gave police excessive powers to deal with political resistance, there were random arrests and detentions, and most political activists, including ANC stalwarts, fled the country, leaving a void in the political struggle. Youth and community organisations such as AZAPO, COSAS and SAYCO mushroomed all over the country. Political activity and youth involvement intensified and manifested a deeper grasp of and concern with political ideology and strategies. Melkote (1993: 1149) posits that 'the military of the youth was such that even five year olds were engaged in the struggle'. While they supported the young people in their struggle for freedom, many were disappointed by their brutal methods. It was common then for anyone viewed as a spy to be 'necklaced' – a rubber tyre filled with petrol being placed around a victim's neck before setting it alight. During these political murders no one was allowed to assist the victim. Detained leaders were replaced by younger, more radical and militant activists, often lacking in political maturity, but nonetheless putting 'the apartheid regime into a state of alert' (Melkote, 1993: 1149).

These echoed some of the concerns expressed by participants that the struggle had got out of hand. The themes of loss of community, loss of respect for elders and loss of cultural traditions showed the powerlessness that was gripping the communities in both provinces. Participants said they were at the crossroads, literally and figuratively.

Smith (1999) posits that what was being witnessed in the black-on-black violence may be understood in part as a consequence of scapegoating, which is driven by inter-individual dynamics of desire. Such desire is potentially violent because it can and often does lead to a rivalry of desires for the very same object. Smith (1999) argues that when mimetic desire is acquisitive, it produces violence at its most fundamental level, is rivalrous and conflictual.

Freire (1998: 50) has observed that oppressed classes of people 'have a diffused magical belief in the invulnerability and power of the oppressor'. Fanon's (1969) analyses suggest that intramediation of desire is not just an American phenomenon but a by-

product of white domination everywhere. Fanon (1969: 52) contends 'that the native's psychological distance from the colonizer is great and the colonizer becomes an idol, a false god whose rivalrous desire to dominate is internalised by the natives who in turn seek to defend his personality by making his brother a scapegoat'. One cannot develop a violent rivalry with a god or idol, but may turn rivalry towards fellow group members. For instance, it is well known locally that the Zulu, despite their defeat at Isandlwana, revered white people and would only take instructions from whites. Hence the easy and unproblematic way they were apparently influenced into causing mayhem in the townships. The Zulus are known locally as having a tendency to look down on and denigrate every other nationality in SA, except whites.

Smith (1999) argues that the violence perpetrated by black youth towards other black youth is a displacement of the violence suffered at the hands of white systems. This transference of violence is in part due to centuries of socialising and intimidating conditioning. Blacks strike out at other blacks because they are perceived as weaker, making them available as scapegoats and closer because of the internal mediation of desire (Smith, 1999).

Makombe (2013: 290), on the other hand, posits that 'the objective of every oppressive system is to have absolute monopoly on all structures of power to ensure that it has total control'. This is argued in reference to the American South, where laws were enacted to exclude African Americans from the social political and economic spheres of life. The direct response to such a system creates criminal subcultures of resistance. According to Cote (2002: 26), 'a person is more likely to offend if they have frequent and constant contact with others involved in such activities'. On the other hand, Fanon (2004) explains 'black on black' violence by saying that 'in a psychological sense, it may be the colonized subject's way of negotiating the trauma associated with the 'fact of Blackness' or what it means (socially, economically and politically etc.) to be Black in a White world' (Makombe, 2013: 300), 'dealing with a state of rage' (2013: 298). Here the environment of the apartheid state was seen as fertile ground for the proliferation of violence and other forms of antisocial behaviour, not just by white South Africans on blacks but within the black community itself.



## 6.6 'No recognition without redistribution'

This core theme encapsulated participants' experience of being overlooked within and beyond the TRC processes. Most felt that perpetrators were put in a privileged position over and above them as survivors.

Huttunen (2007) posits that the German word *Anerkennung* means that somebody recognises somebody else as being worth something. The Oxford dictionary on the other hand defines *Recognition* as: 'know again, identify as known before, accord notice or consideration to acknowledge or realise validity or quality or character'. *Misrecognition* is therefore the opposite, which is what this section will deal with.

Freire's (1994) approach regarding the 'pedagogy of the oppressed', aims at the emancipation of people from social and economic conditions, whilst Charmaz (2011) focused on the use of grounded theory in social justice research by which she means 'studies that attend to inequalities and equality, barriers and access, poverty and privilege, individual and collective good and their implications for suffering whilst taking a critical stance toward social structures and processes that shape individual and collective life' (Charmaz, 2011:359). These claims are relevant to a discussion about how the survivors of HRVs perceived themselves as being misrecognised in the TRC process and may explain the concern expressed by participants of their feelings of being overlooked and ignored.

Mr Mathata, and other participants, had alluded to the dismissive treatment from the TRC and they linked this with their political party (the ANC) who they felt had forgotten them. They described 'comrades' occupying high position and leading comfortable lives, forgetting their fellow fighters. Mr Mathata felt unrecognised and his self-esteem and self-confidence were at low ebb. For Mr Mathata, this might be interpreted as being worst kind of humiliation, not to be seen or noticed, especially given the involvement and the commitment he had contributed to the liberation of the SA. As according to Huttunen (2007:424), 'recognition is a precondition of actual personhood and personal identity as well as being recognised by being given credit for the work done (dignity)'. As a result this misrecognition Mr Mathata might feel his contribution does not credit him with any dignity.

Mrs Bohloko, whose lawyer son was killed, said she not only felt misrecognised by the ANC and TRC process but was denied her humanness. As Taylor (1994) argues, recognition is not a courtesy owed to people, it is a vital human need. Most participants expressed similar feelings about how they were treated by the TRC and the ANC, it echoed their treatment in the apartheid era. They felt utterly forgotten. Honneth (2004), cited in Huttunen (2007), presents the formation of self-confidence which emanates from being acknowledged, validated and recognised as follows:

‘This relation of recognition thus also depends on the concrete physical existence of other persons who acknowledge each other with special feelings of appreciation. The positive attitude which the individual is capable of assuming towards himself he experiences this type of emotional recognition is that of self-confidence’ (Honneth, 2004: 253). This view resonates with the philosophy of ‘Ubuntu’ where by being recognised or recognising others, elevates everybody irrespective of differences in many aspects of life. Fraser et al. (2004), and Freire (1994) add on another layer to this emotional attribute, that of the equal distribution of resources.

Whilst Honneth’s argument about the importance of recognition is very valuable and encourages a debate, Fraser’s dualistic model seems to fit better with participants in this study because it does not pathologise people’s struggles. She critiques Honneth’s & Taylor’s views which present misrecognition as a damaged identity, and which emphasise psychic structures over social institutions and relations. Honneth’s Tripartite schema is based on the levels of love, respect and esteem forms of recognition, explaining how concerns for equality and difference are two separate needs even though both must be satisfied (Presby 2003). However, his dismissal of redistribution of material wealth as equally important and irreducible, makes it less attractive and inappropriate for the SA situation. In addition, his normative monoism of recognition, which means all forms of social justice are forms of the maldistribution of recognition, a flaw identified in the theory by Thompson & Yar, (2011) on the basis that, although debates about the politics of recognition have yielded significant theoretical insights into the nature of recognition, its logical and necessary counterpart, misrecognition, has been relatively neglected (Thompson & Yar, 2011). The authors argue that for some thinkers, the idea of misrecognition has a certain priority over that of recognition since,

so they argue, it is the experience of such misrecognition which is the impetus behind struggles for recognition.

In addition, direct criticism towards Honneth's philosophy of recognition has been levelled by authors such as Fraser (2003), Markell (2003) and Seglow, (2009). On the whole, Fraser's idea of recognition/misrecognition appears more suited to the SA situation. Honneth, whose ideas are based on Hegel and his *Struggle for Recognition*, believe that humans need recognition in order to form integrated identities, which makes it possible for them to achieve self-realisation, and he argues that justice is achieved to the extent to which the relations of recognition necessary for such self-realisation are in place (Thomson & Yar, 2011). However in sharp contrast, Fraser's account is strongly anti-Hegelian, making no reference to individual identity or self-realisation. According to her, justice is a matter of parity of participation, which is achieved when all citizens can participate on par with their peers in the life of their society, a situation that has been denied the Black South African communities of apartheid SA for decades. Fraser (2000) is concerned with what she calls *the problem of displacement*, i.e. the move from redistribution to recognition which, according to her, is occurring despite of, or because of, an acceleration of economic globalisation at a time when an aggressively expanding capitalism is radically exacerbating economic inequality. Equally she is also concerned with *the problem of reification*, the struggles she describes as occurring at the moment of hugely increasing transcultural interactions and communication, when accelerated migration and global media are hybridising and pluralising cultural forms. She describes the routes these struggles are taking as drastically simplifying and reifying group identities rather than promoting respectful interaction within increasing multi-cultural contexts (Fraser, 2000).

Fraser therefore views the identity model of recognition as deeply flawed, both, being deficient theoretically and problematic politically and she proposes an alternative which equates the politics of recognition with identity politics and in doing so, encourages both the 'reification of group identities and the *displacement* of the politics of redistribution' (Fraser, 2000:113). She therefore proposes treating recognition as a question of social status and misrecognition as status subordination. The author argues that to view recognition as a matter of status means examining institutionalised patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors and if such

patterns constitute actors as peers, capable of participating on par with one another equally then we speak of reciprocal recognition and status equality. On the status model, on the other hand, 'misrecognition constitutes a form of institutionalised subordination and thus a serious violation of justice' (Fraser, 2000:114). In addressing maldistribution, Fraser argues that the other obstacles to participatory parity is the fact that equal participation is also impeded when actors lack the necessary resources to interact with others as peers. Therefore unlike the identity model, Fraser posits that 'the status model understands social justice as encompassing two analytically distinct dimensions: a dimension of recognition, which concerns the effects of institutionalised meanings and norms on the relative standing of social actors; and a dimension of distribution, which involves the allocation of disposal resources to social actors' (Fraser, 2000: 116) – a theoretical model that would be easily understood and accepted by participants of this study as these two struggles are exactly what they have been fighting for during apartheid SA and latterly during the TRC process. Therefore by advocating for continuing with struggles for economic justice alongside for respect Fraser is compatible with Freire's ideas of emancipation of the oppressed people from the repressive social and economic conditions.

My belief is that the two, i.e. *social recognition*, referring to people's respect, love and caring for each other, and *critical recognition*, referring to universal political and economic justice, go together as they are complementary (Huttunen, (2007).

## **6.7 A flicker of hope**

Although participants expressed disappointment following testimony to the TRC, some expressed retaining a flicker of hope. It has been demonstrated in the studies reviewed in Chapter 2, and in this one, that immediately following testimony, most survivors had hopes that the TRC as well as the GNU would ensure that their needs as victims would be centre-stage. As demonstrated in some later studies, and this study in particular, the layers of betrayal have eroded this sense of optimism and made participants doubt that they ever had hope or could have a sense of hope for the future.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines 'hope' as being concerned with expectations, desires and trust. Although hope can be elusive, it can also be encouraging. Hope is the state which promotes the desire for positive outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life or in the world at large. Despair, on the other hand, is usually defined in dictionaries as the opposite of hope. As Freire (1998; cited in Weiler, 2003) contends, 'hope is central for strategic progressive change'. But Nicholls (2006), in her expeditions to Kathmandu, confirmed this idea that hope alone was not enough in times of hardship, and questioned whether hope could reside in a depressive position, where it could be transformed into more realistic reparative work in line with Klein's understanding of 'reparation'.

Whilst most participants in this study had experienced betrayal after betrayal, which resulted in them fearing that nothing would ever change in their lives, they transformed what they called being in a 'stuck' situation into an opportunity for hope. Mainly this was brought about by the fact that they still had responsibilities towards loved ones: that is, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Despair was therefore not an option; they had to find hope, although most believed in line with Freire's (1998) teachings that hope in itself was not enough, and that action was needed. Capturing the spirit of past political action, they started talking about how the struggles were continuing. They may have changed their perspective and no longer expected positive change to improve their own lives *per se*, but they thought that the TRC might have served a beneficial purpose in bringing these issues to the fore.

There have been different layers of hope since the transformation of the apartheid state into a democratic state. The first taste of hope for all black South Africans was when Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990. The whole country experienced a sense of elation, euphoria and optimism about their future. Indeed, most participants in this study felt a sense of freedom and liberation, as had been promised them when they joined liberation movements such as the ANC. The release of Nelson Mandela was followed by the creation of the TRC in 1995, where victims were encouraged to share their stories with the promise that these stories would be acknowledged and validated. The Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act (1995) said that the purpose of the TRC was 'to restore respect and dignity to victims'.

However, the government's reneging on the promises of the TRC has caused a sense of betrayal and bitterness amongst survivors. Hope seemed elusive. At the point of interview, some 14 years after the closure of the TRC, reparations, monetary and symbolic, had not been made, and improvements in socio-economic conditions had not been experienced by victims. It may be that survivors of human rights violations may have only hope to fall back on.

Freire (1998; cited in Weiler, 2003: 33) posits that 'the oppressed, must not see the limitation of their freedom as inevitable and not see their struggle for a just world as fated'. This awareness must lead to action, to praxis: that is, the struggle to transform their unjust world. Like Biko (1981) and Hooks (1990) before, Freire (1998) argues that the oppressed can lead the struggle for true humanisation, because they are the ones who truly understand the 'terrible significance of an oppressive society' (Weiler, 2003: 33).

Chapter 5 has highlighted the fact that most participants believed that the struggle continues. One of the participants, Mrs Matola, commented that all she had left to do is 'wait and see'. One of the most important positive aspects of this hope is that most participants came to realise that more work still needed to be done.

By the time of the interviews, it appears that participants had re-evaluated the promises made by the TRC and found them unattainable or unachievable. Hopper (2001) argues that many psychoanalysts agree with the Freudian notion hope is one of the elements of gratitude which is a product of the work of mourning, and that giving up unrealistic hopes, such as the hope of securing big houses and swimming pools, 'while maintaining a hopeful attitude or orientation to life and living, indicates that therapy has been successful' (Hopper, 2001: 206), or we might add, that adjustment without therapy has been successful.

Whilst I might not go as far as claiming that kind of success for participants in this study, most have refused to have their experiences pathologised and their active involvement in Khulumani suggests that they are attempting to move on in life. This positive step is, however, not a straightforward result of the effectiveness of the TRC.

The findings of the study will be considered further in the concluding chapter, in light of the limitations of the research, and a final summary of the contribution of this project will be offered.

## **Chapter 7      Conclusions**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide an overview of this research project and the findings that emanated from it. I will then move on to interpret and review the key findings. My focus is particularly on the latter objective, as this is where my study makes a unique contribution. I will then note key comparisons from Chapter 6, where these findings resonate with previous work. Next I will move on to appraise the research critically and offer implications for further research and for practice, finally discussing how I would do the research differently if given the opportunity.

The following are the research questions and objectives:

- to explore the multiple personal, social and political events that led participants to testify to the TRC;
- to analyse the participants' reported consequences of testifying before the TRC;
- to describe and understand the experiences of the survivors' preparation for appearing before the TRC;
- to analyse the extent to which appearing before the TRC impacted on the wellbeing of survivors of human rights violations in the long term;
- to explore the participants' experiences of forgiveness, reconciliation, amnesty and healing.

### **7.2 Overview of the research project**

The above objectives were explored using semi-structured interviews with 30 participants, drawn from two areas in SA: Gauteng and the Western Cape provinces. The events that motivated participants in the two areas to testify to the TRC were markedly different, even though they were all recruited from an NGO called the Khulumani support group. The sample was a mixed group of men and women, all from socially deprived backgrounds and all of whom testified to the TRC. Data were analysed using a modified GTM (Charmaz, 2008b).

In the Gauteng areas, participants wished to testify about experiences such as state violence, persecution of political activists and conflicts between rival organisations such as the ANC and the IFP. In contrast, participants in the Western Cape wished to testify about events relating to the on-going apartheid laws, such as forced removals and pass laws. The consequences of such conflicts in the Gauteng areas included sadness and anxieties within communities, as loved ones were either detained indefinitely or disappeared without a trace. In the Western Cape, loss of jobs, homes, possessions and communities led to feelings of powerlessness, with the youth taking over control of communities from the elders. Amidst all this, the recruitment of some members of the black communities to join white counter-insurgencies led to what many called 'black on black' violence. This phenomenon was explored in Chapter 6.

Prior to the TRC, the Gauteng participants had fragile hopes, as nothing much was taking place to deal with the conflicts, while in the Western Cape participants said they felt 'stuck'. However, with the creation of the TRC in 1995, participants from both provinces reported gaining some hope that something would start to change. Both the advent of the TRC and on-going support from Khulumani were motivators that encouraged and enabled them to submit and tell their stories to the TRC. At this point, hope seemed to have been restored. For the Gauteng participants, there was hope that survivors would at last find some truths about atrocities perpetrated, recover and bury disappeared bodies, and gain acknowledgement and reparations. The Western Cape participants hoped to be reunited with families, and to regain law and order, and security in their lives.

Chapter 5 explored the long-term legacy of testifying to the TRC. Participants from both areas largely shared an understanding of their experiences of testifying. The first theme, 'unfulfilled promises', emanated from sub-themes such as promises stated by the ANC and the TRC, speaking out/being heard, being recorded, and finding the dead and burying them. Apart from despair at failure to find and bury bodies, these failed promises have not generated a lot of attention from previous studies. Yet they were very much a cause for concern among participants in this study. Participants' disappointment with inadequate reparations is an issue that has been well covered by other studies, although the longer-term impact and the meanings that survivors attached to these experiences have not been well documented.



The second theme, 'challenges of managing feelings around forgiveness, amnesty, reconciliation and healing', resonates with previous studies, especially amnesty, which has been perceived as controversial by most survivors.

The third theme, 'feeling betrayed and let down by lack of improved socio-economic conditions', emerged from sub-themes such as lack of adequate housing, education, health and jobs. This lack of hoped-for change in material and social circumstances, linked to 'unfulfilled promises', has not been given adequate attention in previous studies. In this study, it has emerged as having a significant impact on participants' appraisal of the value of their testimony, and has been interpreted in terms of Fraser's perspective on the interdependence of recognition and redistribution of resources.

The fourth theme emerged as 'suspended hope', as participants re-evaluate the effectiveness of the TRC processes. The little hope they retained seemed to be reserved for the next generation. Around 14 years following testifying, many participants expressed doubt that they would experience much change in their living circumstances. Most were already older and not eligible for jobs. Their retained hope was only a glimmer but it was there and being channelled into political action, as was explored in Chapter 6.

The overall substantial theme that emerged from all these themes has been identified as 'misrecognition', interpreted through Nancy Fraser's advocacy there can be 'no recognition without redistribution' and Thompson's and Hogget's (2011) identity theory, called 'the politics of misrecognition'. These perspectives captured participants' experiences of feeling unacknowledged and not treated with the respect and dignity that had been promised by the TRC mandate.

### **7.3 Critical evaluation**

When I took on the project I had no idea where it was going to lead me, but through the process I have learned two things about myself: firstly, the type of person I am, including my worldview, of which I was not fully conscious until I embarked on this study; and secondly, I have gained increased awareness of the impact of apartheid on both black and white people in the country. In other words, I found out that my assumptions

regarding my knowledge about SA and its people could be challenged. This was a real revelation and a wake-up call that took me out of my comfort zone. The two most important vehicles brought to bear on this journey that I took on were: firstly, the interviews I conducted with members of the Khulumani support groups in Gauteng and the Western Cape provinces, by which I was emotionally affected and humbled, and for which I will always be grateful for; and secondly, reading about the truth commissions in general and the massive outpourings and proliferation of literature, especially about the South African TRC – this has opened a new whole world for me.

The challenge I faced with conducting interviews in SA after having left the country more than 20 years ago was a turning point for me. Previously I had taken for granted the experiences of black SA, of which I am a part. Nobody could have prepared me sufficiently for the horror of the stories I heard when I went to collect data in 2010. As an 'insider', I thought I knew about the struggles of South African blacks and this view was soon to be challenged. Bringing an 'outsider' perspective, I have the Brunel Ethics Committee to thank, which pointed out concerns which I had overlooked and thought were irrelevant for someone who was born and bred in that country. Supervision sessions also helped to ground me and put things into perspective.

My social work experience as someone professionally aware of the principles of social justice, empowerment and self-determination of poor people as well as my Ubuntu worldview helped me in being able to relate to the participants as co-constructors of realities employing the social constructionist perspective. Being an insider as well, in some respects, became critical in my ability to relate to the experiences of participants whilst at same time being constantly aware of the danger of over-identifying with participants. I had to try and keep some degree of distance without being overly objective, whilst at the same time being aware that it was impossible to be 'outside' of the research process (Willig, 2008).

Adopting a qualitative approach with social constructionism as my epistemological stance and using adapted grounded theory method as an analysis tool helped me not only to have a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and the meanings they attached to their experiences, but to develop rigour in my study. This epistemological awareness underpinning my research also challenged many of the assumptions I had made previously about what and how knowledge was gained. This

was made possible by the use of reflexivity, which helped me to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings (Willig, 2008: 11).

As research takes place within a social context, it is a joint product of the researcher's and the participants' mutual interpretations and negotiations, and it is therefore co-constituted (Finlay, 1998). Finlay argues that to miss out on this process could threaten the validity of the research. Having worked with participants in this study, using reflexivity has forced me to look not only inwards but out as well. This has highlighted to me how both the participants and I as the researcher have been transformed, and how we both have transformed the research process. Throughout the research I battled with conflicting emotions and values, as some of my reflexive journal entries have indicated. There were times when I found myself being critical of what I was seeing and what was happening around me during the collection of data period. For instance, I felt angry at the level of atrocities perpetrated, particularly as I was not aware of them when I was in the country, what seemingly looked like the expectation placed on survivors to forgive against their wishes, the level of poverty, and the erosion and destruction of family lives and traditions. I had to use a lot of my reflective and reflexive skills to counteract my bias. At the end of the interviews, it was quite clear that I and the participants had had a massive impact on each other and that we had all been affected by the interviews. Beer (1997; cited in Finlay, 1998) argues that 'interviews augment experience, rather than simply reflecting it. They alter meaning, instead of just delineating it. They change people' (Finlay, 1998: 455).

Unlike several studies I have reviewed, this study was guided by a number of research questions (see Chapter 1), which were open ended and could not be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. These questions called for answers which provided detailed descriptions and explanations of the phenomena; the process-oriented nature of the study produced a wealth of detail which emerged in Chapters 4 and 5.

There have been very few in-depth qualitative studies of those who gave testimony to the South African TRC. Apart from three studies that I reviewed in the literature – Kaminer's (2006) study, which used mixed methods; De la Rey and Owen's (1998) study, which used mixed methods informed by social constructionism, like mine; and Clark's (2012) study, which was undertaken some years after victims' testimonies to the TRC – my study stands alone in the fact that it was based on in-depth interviews with

a much larger sample than previous research. Furthermore, some participants were interviewed in their homes, whilst others were interviewed in local venues which they attended on a regular basis (e.g. a community centre and/or Khulumani centres). This increased their levels of comfort in the interviews. Only Kaminer's study was similar in the use of GTM principles, but with a smaller sample of 20 participants, and with limited information given about the analysis process.

In terms of validity or trustworthiness, my study enabled participants to speak freely about their motivations to testify, and this included their recollections of the injustices that were perpetrated by the apartheid system. This is important to mention, especially as the TRC mandate did not include such abuses, as has been shown in most studies. It has therefore been criticised for reducing its definition of apartheid's human rights violations to 'gross human rights abuses'. For instance, most participants in the Western Cape were encouraged to testify due to apartheid's unjust policies. This is a topic that has received little previous attention from researchers. Participants were also enabled to reflect on the meanings of testifying from their vantage point some 14 years after doing so.

As I had limited presuppositions about what their views would be and had supported open disclosures in the interviews, I was somewhat surprised at the negative views some expressed about the achievements of the TRC. Naively I thought that, as apartheid had gone, there could not be much more to wish for. Little did I know that the notion of forgiveness was more complex, and does not necessarily translate into reconciliation, that reconciliation might not mean truth or vice versa, and that making promises, no matter how unrealistic, can have a negative impact on survivors' perceptions. Furthermore, I was challenged by hearing how testimony does not necessarily lead to healing and how healing is not a linear process, but is impacted by all the other dynamics of what took place during the TRC processes. I had to learn to navigate all this in collaboration with the participants.

Most of the studies mentioned in Chapter 2 (see Table 2.1) were conducted by 'outsiders' in collaboration with 'insider' interviewers. The latter were tasked with collecting data in the participants' own language, but the responsibility for analysing the data was left with the 'outsider' academics. Hence most researchers reporting these studies were not the ones who had conducted the interviews. Nor did they have the

opportunity to reflect on the data collection process as it unfolded. This was in contrast with my study, in which I collected, translated and analysed the data. This gave me the opportunity to interact very closely with the data as required of someone using GTM principles. This ensured that 'little was lost in translation' (Willig, 2008: 17) and nuances in the language were captured.

Rigour was also increased through having a relatively large sample in qualitative terms, and of the size recommended in GTM studies. Drawing participants from two areas of South Africa also helped to explore their diverse experiences in detail, and to reveal some differences in their motives for giving testimony – an issue not explored in previous research.

Some findings from other studies (e.g. Hamber, 2000, 2009; Clark, 2008; Kaminer et al., 2001; Kaminer, 2006; Chapman & Van der Merwe, 2008) were similar to this study in that most participants described experiencing difficulties in managing the complex notions of forgiveness, truth-telling, amnesty and healing, as well as general feelings that the TRC did not deliver sufficiently, but most of these studies took place shortly following testimony. The present study was unique in being conducted about 14 years after the giving of testimony, with a large sample of very socially disadvantaged participants. It revealed how, despite positive motivations, the meanings of testifying to the TRC had become tarnished over time for most participants. Whilst participants had largely positive views about the effectiveness of the TRC immediately following testifying, this hope soon dissipated when they realised afterwards that their contributions to the TRC were not acknowledged and validated: for example, through the fulfilment of promises. This seems to have created the tarnished image that is now being portrayed.

Clark's (2012) study and mine were conducted at more or less the same time, although Clark included only four participants who had any direct experience of giving statements to the TRC as victims of human rights violations, and these seem to have been more socially advantaged. There appears to be very little follow-up research to find out how victims'/survivors' situations have changed since giving their testimony, especially since not much was delivered to them psycho-socially and economically. My study has revealed what other scholars, especially psychologists and mental health workers, had suspected: a one-off testimony to the TRC by victims whose experiences of

the abhorrent system of apartheid had been entrenched for three decades does not result in 'healing'.

As Brounéus (2008) revealed in her study with 16 women affected by the Rwanda genocide, giving testimony involves intense psychological suffering for victims, as my study has also indicated. In addition, Brounéus argues that psychological research on one-off debriefing shows that, due to short-term exposure to the trauma, testifying involves risks to vulnerable people, especially in an environment surrounded by the family members of perpetrators (Brounéus, 2008).

Findings in my study suggested that psychological intervention alone would not be sufficient to deal with the on-going multifaceted sufferings that participants were still experiencing. Improved socio-economic conditions were also required to address a real need in the devastated communities. For example, compensation was of vital importance in the East Rand of the Gauteng province, where conflicts between the ANC and the IFP were at their ferocious worst and when houses were ransacked and possessions taken. Similarly, in the Western Cape where the apartheid laws (including forced removals and pass laws) had devastating effects in fragmenting families and communities, money was urgently required to address practical needs.

Fraser (2004; cited in Huttunen, 2007), with her 'perspectival dualist' analysis of social justice, argues that redistribution and recognition are equally fundamental aspects of social justice and seeks to link these two categories together without reducing either to the other. She argues further that 'only a framework that integrates the two analytically distinct perspectives of distribution and recognition can grasp the imbrication of class inequality and status hierarchy in contemporary society' (Fraser, 2004: 3). In line with the social constructionist perspective, Fraser (2004) argues, in contrast to Honneth's (1996) views, that 'the worst scenario would be a simplified group identity which denies the polyphony of voices and the multiplicity of individual identifications'.

This study has revealed that the meanings of giving testimony need to be understood not only in psychological terms (as Khulumani members have already intimated) but in a wider socio-economic context. This gap is not something that has been widely considered in previous studies, especially those in the South African context. Nonetheless, I have to acknowledge that the source of recruitment via an

activist support group Khulumani, with its specific anti-therapeutic perspective, may have had some influence on these findings.

Needless to say, reading about apartheid SA in relation to the process of the TRC opened my mind and helped me to take on new insights. The proliferation of the material created by the TRC meant that I was exposed to many varied views about the subject and this has helped me to re-assess my own views. My feelings about apartheid and its injustices were not only tested but also put into some kind of perspective. I have been exposed to new ways of thinking which deepened my reflective skills as a social work practitioner as well as my reflexive skills as a researcher. For participants, I hope that by taking part in this research they have also learned something new, that the meanings we have co-constructed were not in vain, and not another layer of disillusionment for them.

#### **7.4 Can truth and reconciliation processes ‘heal’ a nation?**

For me the answer is both ‘no’ and ‘yes’ depending on the different issues involved, especially as regards apartheid SA. Moon (2009) contends that, since the inception of the South African TRC, a therapeutic moral order has become one of the dominant frameworks within which states attempt to deal with a legacy of violent conflict.

Moon argues that the rise of the ‘therapeutic state’ in the post-war has been theorised by a number of writers who have identified a shift in the rationale of governance from an older rationale based upon nature, religion, security, justice or material prosperity, and towards an ostensibly emancipatory rationale characterised by a concern for the psychological health of its citizens.

The critical issue was not simply that SA needed to heal the wounds of the violent conflict and that truth-telling was the way to do this, but that healing was to be the first and foundational task of the new post-apartheid regime; the successful performance of this would form the basis of its future claim to govern (Moon, 2009). Whilst in some part this might be true, most scholars are aware that the goal of the TRC first and foremost was to ensure a smooth transfer of political power based on its negotiated settlement. For instance, most studies, including mine, have revealed that most victims did not forgive unconditionally; they did not believe that truth had been told, especially those

families whose loved ones are still missing; and they were against amnesty, as most believed that perpetrators should be punished for gross human rights abuses but that, regardless of their own forgiveness, the new government was going to dispense forgiveness anyway once perpetrators had met the conditions of amnesty. Based on these findings it is difficult to imagine how reconciled and healed the nation is. Of course, the findings are based on small samples of the population. Large-scale studies are required, involving wider samples of the population of the country, not only those who were involved in 'gross human rights abuses', but also those who suffered severely in other ways under the apartheid system.

Psychologists, based on their clinical work with trauma patients, believe that forgiving one who has done wrong is the first step towards healing: in other words, forgiveness has been linked to healing, albeit in a structured manner, as much as narratives have. This assumption means that most victims/survivors who declined to forgive have not experienced the benefits of healing; nor could they be described as having had closure. Apart from that, the TRC's failure to deliver, in terms of limited justice and truth, unrecovered dead bodies, limited or lack of reparations, ambiguity about amnesty, lack of improvement in socio-economic conditions and the legacy of apartheid (substandard education, a lack of adequate housing and limited health services), is hardly likely to render healing possible to disgruntled victims.

The reason for the diagnosis of SA's illness lies in the mandate of the TRC: 'gross human rights perpetrated with political objective' (Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995). As has been mentioned several times before, the mandate did not locate the origins of trauma in the apartheid system *per se*, but in conflicts between liberation factions and recent conflicts with the state. Due to the political compromise, the TRC arguably compromised all the way, from the beginning to the end. This is hardly a recipe for healing.

I disagree with Hamber (2009) when he argues that the TRC was experienced as healing for some and not for others. Based on my study I would say that the TRC could be seen as healing only for a very few – namely, individuals who had nothing to lose, people whose circumstances were not diminished much by the conflicts – but much less so for all those people living in poverty who lost the few possessions they had, which were not replaced despite the promises made. My study has revealed these problems



with healing by interviewing a much larger group of very socially disadvantaged participants than any previous study in this field.

However, on the basis of my study, I agree with Hamber (2009: 72) when he posits that ‘the past has had a deep-rooted hold on the survivors’. During the interviews with participants in my study, I could never understand how victims/survivors, both direct and indirect victims, could live to tell these stories. The levels of atrocity were beyond my comprehension and I was intrigued about how people could still bring themselves to talk about them. Following testimony to the TRC, Minow (1998: 333; cited in Hamber, 2009) called them ‘therapeutic moments’. Moments yes, but very short-lived ones, I imagine, with very limited healing or closure, and experiencing grief and mourning that, if it goes unchecked, might turn into melancholia that will be difficult to reverse. The fact that up until now survivors have not been followed up means that they might be going through grief and mourning processes for which they are not receiving the support they need.

By its own admission the TRC’s report acknowledges that in many cases the experience of testifying or making statements ‘initiated more than it closed’ (Tutu et al 1998a). Despite the successes of the South African TRC, it would be an error to overestimate the ability of truth commissions or public testimony to address *en masse* the needs of individuals struggling with a history of human rights abuses (Hamber, 2009). Although Hamber believes that a TRC process is not ‘testimony’ or ‘narrative’ therapy, he contends that bearing witness or giving testimony may have some psychological benefits (Agger, 1994; Weine, 2006). However, the findings from the current study suggest that despite the hopes that motivated their giving of testimony, the participants in this study rarely found closure in the longer term.

Personally I believe that healing, like forgiveness, is a private matter. Only individuals who have experienced it will know if and when it has taken place. Based on the interviews conducted with victims/survivors and the findings of the collected data, in victims’ view, healing involves being able to tell their stories, being properly acknowledged and validated, being able to make sense of their sorrow, coming to terms with it and being able to move on following a process of proper mourning. This includes the ability to locate and bury their loved ones, which is of the utmost significance, especially within the African culture.

## 7.5 Implications for practice

In this section I will try to look at the implications for practice following this research, from a psychological perspective as well as from a social work point of view. From reading the available literature on the work of the South African TRC, it is clear that psychologists have been in the forefront and psychological terminology has been used extensively to explain the experiences of victims/survivors who testified before it. Psychologists and other mental health workers from the Centre of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) did a lot of ground work in the creation of the TRC, and concepts such as forgiveness, truth, reconciliation and healing are pervasive in this discipline based on their clinical work with trauma. Therefore it makes sense that they would be the ones leading the way in terms of how and where to take things forward. However, participants in my study have made it quite clear that any assessment of their situation should not be described as 'pathology', but should be treated as a reflection of the failure of the TRC and the GNU to follow through their recommendations and honour promises they made.

Most of the scholars in this area have agreed amongst themselves and suggested that 'testimony' or 'narrative' is not therapy, as indicated above. Long-term interventions need to be arranged for victims/survivors in order to ensure that participants are assisted to have a deeper understanding of their trauma and how to come to terms with it, as many participants were still struggling with their memories of horrific events many years later.

In contrast, my findings have suggested that, for many participants (most of whom are already in their late 50s and 60s), the only hope they have is not for themselves but for younger generations – their grandchildren and, for some, great-grandchildren. What they had in my mind was to see better education, adequate health services and job opportunities for younger generations. In addition, the gap between old and young caused by the dislocation of communities can be addressed by initiating community-based intergenerational interventions, which might encourage hope, restore trust in the older generation and decrease a sense of powerlessness to effect change.

Some South African scholars believe that 'the challenges facing the country cross-sectorally and institutionally cannot be treated in an isolated manner but have to be synchronised with the challenges currently facing the profession of social work as well' (Mamphiswana and Noyoo, 2000: 21). They argue that social work should be heavily involved in identifying and addressing social problems. In other words, the new SA needs to introduce an adequate welfare system that is capable of dealing with the aftermath of the apartheid system: that is, to eradicate the inequalities and fragmentation that characterised apartheid. Therefore, because of social work's closeness to the poor, it must take a leading role in changing society's view of how to address social problems.

However, social work practice is arguably irrelevant in a state that has no welfare structures. Perhaps because the connections between social work interventions and national policies are indirect, hidden and unspoken, literature about the issue hardly exists (Shamai, 1998). Social workers cannot operate optimally if not supported to do their work by the state, as was the case in SA during the apartheid era. However, although apartheid has gone, the unjust relations it harnessed remain (Noyoo, 2006), and participants in this study continued to be affected by these. Noyoo argues that oppression, as widely and explicitly expressed by the former apartheid system, is not a static but a dynamic process. Therefore, once they are integrated into society's institutional order and culture, and into the individual consciousness of its people through socialisation, oppressive tendencies come to permeate and affect almost all relations (Gil, 1998; cited in Noyoo, 2006). Consequently, these authors suggest that social work should take the lead in identifying and rectifying the current oppressive patterns in SA, which are easily discernible because of the now existing democratic structures.

Noyoo (2006) recommends that social work should concern itself with human rights work as the concern currently emerging in SA is that the once vibrant civil society is beginning to dissipate. In the past, every sector was attuned to the realisation of one grand goal: liberation. According to the Noyoo, this was a unifying factor which ultimately disguised all other dissonances because everybody wanted to achieve the ultimate dream of a free SA. Many social workers through various organisations were heavily involved in challenging the dehumanising practices of the apartheid state, which had effectively obliterated people's fundamental human rights.

The interim constitution of SA, which was later refined and adopted in 1996, has been dubbed one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, as it not only guarantees a host of rights for the citizenry, but goes further by recognising socio-economic rights such as the rights to education, health and a safe environment, and includes various policies passed for the purpose of redressing many of the socio-economic imbalances of the past (Noyoo, 2006). However, despite some progress there are still entrenched vices that threaten to erode people's basic human rights in a new SA. This has been testified to by participants in this study. These pervasive problems include poverty, inequality, crime, violence against women and children, and racism, some of which have been confirmed by findings in this study.

Based on these findings, I agree with Noyoo that human rights are intertwined with the mission and vision of social work practice. Social workers are invited to step up actions aimed at advocating on behalf of clients, resolve conflicts, link people to resources and, above all, research and teach in ways that will enable a transforming SA to begin to create a way of life that respects human rights.

In addition, whilst there are some suggestions for involving national politics in social work interventions (Shamai, 1998), there are those who advocate for a change towards a developmental social welfare to help enhance the wellbeing of the poor and disenfranchised. It is recognised that poverty and unemployment are the biggest social problems in SA. These were also the two most worrying issues for most of the participants: poverty because it affects them and their families, and unemployment for the younger generations. These on-going issues have contributed towards tarnishing the meanings of giving testimony to the TRC.

Faced with the challenges and the expectations of millions of poor and destitute people who had fought for freedom and voted the ANC into power, as suggested by the experiences of most participants in this study, the GNU hoped for a fair and far-reaching welfare system. However, whilst describing itself as democratic and socialist, it could not finance an institutional welfare state. So an alternative possibility was the construction of developmental social welfare policy of the sort advocated by James Midgley (1995), who defined social development as a 'process of planned social change to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development' (Midgley, 1995).

I personally like this idea of community involvement, as it is empowering and makes much more efficient use of resources than individual social work intervention (i.e. casework), especially with hard-pressed governments. Consequently, community programmes such as the ones first put on the national freedom agenda in 1972 – deeply inspired and fuelled by Steve Biko’s black consciousness movement, and influenced by the works of Paulo Freire and Saul Alinsky on consciousness raising and community development– are the ones most feasible when new governments are struggling to produce and act on socio-economic programmes earmarked for the needy. Khulumani is, in a way, already offering this kind of developmental encouragement of its members, hoping to help emancipate them through self-reliant and community-based programmes.

As already suggested earlier by Moglen (2005) in section 6.3 and through examples provided of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and other women’s organisations in several Latin American countries, participants of this study have already been influenced by the ideology of Khulumani support group in terms of how to emancipate themselves from ‘being stuck’ or frozen in their grief. Prior to the TRC process taking place, the victim and self-help group was already supporting victims of political violence in SA. However it became more relevant and robust in anticipation of the SA TRC and operated on the premise that encouraging people to speak out about the atrocities of the past was psychologically beneficial and would advance their goal of being recognised as victims of apartheid violence (Hamber, 2009). However Khulumani’s perspective was more political than psychological, so none of its members ascribed to being viewed as victims. Rather they preferred the term ‘survivor’ and proposed a depathologised form of their atrocities. Perhaps therefore most of their assessment of the TRC and its success has been based on delivery of concrete resources. This has been cemented by the fact that Khulumani, apart from being instrumental in lobbying and shaping the TRC process to ensure that it maintained its stated victim-centred approach, it went out its way to further assist its members, otherwise referred to by the TRC as victims of human rights violations, to write and submit statements to the TRC for presentation to it. There was therefore a particular style of these written statements despite the fact that emphasis was placed on participants relating their own stories in their own way. Nonetheless a certain ethos, consistency, honesty and openness were

the central core. It is therefore obvious that Khulumani would exert an influence on its members on how to conduct themselves and vice versa, and ultimately might shape some of the findings of this study.

Nonetheless, the idea of community wellbeing and empowerment emerged strongly and sits very well with me and most of the participants in my study, as I explore in the next section.

## **7.6 Alternative research strategies**

It has emerged from the findings of my study that most participants did not feel recognised and validated by the TRC due to its failure to achieve certain goals as per its mandate. I feel very strongly that further follow-up and long-term work with victims is needed to assess what happened to all those victims who testified before the TRC. As mentioned already, psychologists and social workers might be well placed to take on this responsibility. However, personally, if I were to do this research again, I would ensure that I spent more time with participants. For pragmatic reasons of financing my stay in SA, and difficulties negotiating access to participants via gatekeepers, I could only spend two months collecting data. Ideally, I would spend longer than this. I would also ensure that I am more confident in the use of grounded theory methodology. GTM needs considerable time and resources due to its time-consuming process and the huge amount of data involved. The idea of an emerging theory being grounded in the data is fascinating and would prompt me to engage in a full grounded theory study if doing this again. For example, if I had had more time in the field, I would have been able to translate and analyse some interviews before tackling the next ones, so building the topic guide and ensuring data saturation, as recommended by Glaser and Strauss. I would also have liked to return analyses to the participants for their comments and verification. It would be valuable also to gain the perspectives of TRC deponents who are not members of the Khulumani group.

As regards human rights abuses, I would advocate more research in this area as there is a dearth of research from a social work perspective (Noyoo, 2006). Most of the research has been carried out from a legal point of view, despite the fact that social work is at the forefront of societal issues. There needs to be a fresh impetus to find out how

conditions of poverty developed, their dynamics, and the factors contributing to their continuation or possible alleviation in SA.

## **7.7 Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed the main objectives and research questions, outlined the method used to collect and analyse data, and summarised the findings and key interpretations of my study. Chapter 4 showed that there were both differences and similarities in motives to testify between the two provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape, whilst Chapter 5 reflected a more shared understanding of the legacy of giving testimony among the two groups. I have discussed the major theme misrecognition and its links with the long-standing failure to deliver socioeconomic resources, emerging from the latter findings and explored in Chapter 5. I then moved on to offer a critical appraisal of the study, summarising a comparison of the findings in this study to previous research. Most importantly, I have shown the significant contribution that my study has made. Implications for further research and practice were discussed, including suggestions for improving the quality of the study and taking it forwards.

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## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1**  
**Khulumani approval letter**

KHULUMANI SUPPORT GROUP  
Non Profit Organisation: NPO 008-135  
National Contact Centre: 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Khotso House  
62 Marshall Street, Marshalltown  
P.O. Box 31958, Braamfontein, 2017 South Africa  
Tel: +27-11-833 2044 Fax: +27 11 833 2048  
[info@khulumani.net](mailto:info@khulumani.net) | [www.khulumani.net](http://www.khulumani.net)



To Whom It May Concern  
Ethics Committee  
Brunel University  
February 11, 2010

Dear Sir / Madam,

**re: Confirmation of Approval of Request of Ms Nthabiseng Faku-Juqula for Permission to Interview Certain Members of Khulumani Support Group**

I am writing in my capacity as National Director of Khulumani Support Group to confirm that Khulumani's management has approved the request of Ms Nthabiseng Faku-Juqula to conduct interviews with certain Khulumani Support Group members in the offices of the National Contact Centre in Marshalltown, Johannesburg during April 2010 for the purposes of a PhD degree. I am furthermore confirming that Ms Faku-Juqula has agreed to reimburse the return travel costs of each interviewee and to provide refreshments for each interviewee on the day of their interview.

The expectation of Khulumani Support Group is that a copy of the transcript of each interview will be tabled with the Khulumani Apartheid Reparations Database. This should be included in the informed consent documentation. A clear plan of how this research will hopefully benefit the organisation and its advocacy agenda, is to be tabled with myself and with Mr Tshepo Madlingozi, Khulumani's National Advocacy Coordinator (Contact email address: [tshepo@khulumani.net](mailto:tshepo@khulumani.net)). Please note that I am willing to be interviewed to provide a perspective on the issues to be dealt with in this research.

We look forward to welcoming Ms Faku-Juqula to our National Contact Centre. I confirm that Khulumani's employee, Mr Mkhize has been authorized to assist Ms Faku-Juqula with the logistics involved in organizing the interviews.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'marjorie jobson', written in a cursive style.

Dr Marjorie Jobson, Mobile: +27 (0)82 268 0223

**Appendix 2**  
**SHSSC Ethics Committee Approval Letter**

School of Health Sciences and  
Social Care

## Research Ethics Committee

School of Health Sciences and  
Social Care  
Brunel University,  
Uxbridge  
Middlesex UB8 3PH  
Telephone: +44 (0)1895 274000  
Web www.brunel.ac.uk

28 April 2010

**Proposer:** Nthabiseng Anna Faku-Juqula

**Title:** Psychological healing for victims/survivors of human rights violations following presentation to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

**Reference:** 10/04/PHD/05

### **Letter of Approval – Phase 1**

The School Research Ethics Committee has considered the amendments recently submitted by you in response to the Committee's earlier review of the above application

The Chair, acting under delegated authority, is satisfied that the amendments accord with the decision of the Committee and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study.

Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- *It should be noted that this letter of approval applies to Phase 1 of the study, i.e. interviews of individuals who participated in the proceedings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission as victims/witnesses.*
- *The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee.*

**NB:**

- **Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the School of Health Sciences and Social Care Research Ethics Committee.**
- **The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee**
- **Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.**
- **The School Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.**

David Anderson-Ford  
School Research Ethics Officer  
School of Health Sciences and Social Care

**David Anderson-Ford**  
**School Research Ethics Officer**  
**School of Health Sciences and Social Care**



## **Appendix 3**

### **Khulumani's research procedures letter**

#### **POLICIES ON RESEARCH PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS**

1. A researcher must send the management a request letter together with her full proposal (including interview schedule and consent form) and ethics clearance letter from her institution.

In the request letter the researcher must indicate how her study will benefit Khulumani, its members in its struggle for social justice, healing, reconciliation, reparations and/or fight against impunity.

2. Interviews/observations with members will only commence after the management has given a written authorisation.

3. The researcher must indicate whether they will be able to give a small stipend to the relevant interviewees for transport and appreciation for time given.

4. The researcher must indicate what contingency plans are in place in case of retraumatisation and post-interview counselling if needed.

5. As the organisation we expect to see the results of the interview before publication - not to censor or change anything but as part of the validation process.

**Appendix 4**  
**Resources and support for participants**

Trauma centre

**1. LUKHANYO CLINIC:**

**54 Broad Road,  
Wynberg, Cape Town 7800**  
**Telephone: Int. +27 217620223/4**  
**Fax: 0866848915**  
**E-mail: lukhanyo@mweb.co.za**

**2. Center for the study of violence**

**Street Address:** 4th Floor, Braamfontein Centre, 22 Jorrisen Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

*Office hours are weekdays from 08h30 until 17h00.*

**Postal address:** PO Box 30778, Braamfontein, 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa.

**Phone:** (011) 403-5102

**Fax:** (011) 403-7532

**E-mail:** [info@csvr.org.za](mailto:info@csvr.org.za)

**3. Ekupholeni Mental Health and Trauma Centre**

Green Zozos Natalspruit Hospital Kathlehong 1432 Gauteng South Africa  
Telephone: 27 11 648 9820  
Fax: 27 11 487 0480

**4. Sophiatown community psychological services**

**Address:** 4 Lancaster St, Westdene, 2092

**Tel:** +27 11 4828530

**Fax:** +27 11 4828530

**5. FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING:**

**Central Gauteng Mental Health Society**

**Address:** Gordonias, 42 Berea Road, cnr Fuller Rd, Bertrams

**NAMES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS AND PHONE NUMBER FOR REFERRALS**

NAME OF ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Beavenue	011 624 2915
CATTS	011 298 8500
CCDU	011 717 9140
Child Line	080 005 5555
Child Welfare	011 298 8500
Commission on Gender Equality	011 403 7182
CORMSA	011 403 7560
CSVR Cape Town	021 447 2170
EWBA	011 403 9372
Emtanjoni center	011 717 4513
Family Life Center	011 788 4784
FAMSA	011 892 4242/ 011 833 2057
FHR	011 339 5560
Ikhaya Lethemba	011 242 3000 / 011 242-3021
Jaburg Parents and Child Counseling Center	011 484 1724
JSR	011 333 0980/ 072 604 8148
Khulumani Support Group	<del>011 403 4696</del> 011 833-2044
Lawyers for Human Rights	011 339 1960/2
Life Line	011 728 1347/ 086 132 2322
Mental Health Line	011 262 6398
Metro Rail	011 773 6936
National P.A Trust	011 606 2850
NICRO	011 <del>403 2955</del> 986-1020/428
Nonkhlenhla (Psychologist)	082 459 2312
POWA	011 612 4345
POWA (Baragwanath) Hospital	011 933 2310
Red Cross	011 339 1992
SA Depression and Anxiety Group (Suicide)	080 056 7567
SAITS	011 747 8677/ 084 298 8135
SANCA	011-482-1070 / 011 226 4210/ 012 7984 366
SWIMA	011 339 3900
Security Down Stairs	011 403 2334
SHEP	011 403 0541
Stop Gender Violence	080 015 0150
Soplin Town	011 482 8530
Teddy Bear Clinic	011 484 4554
Themba Lesizwe	012 362 5051
Trauma Center Cape Town	021 465 7373/6
Tshwaranang	011 403 4267
UNHCR	011 354 8303
UISNDISO	011 334 1424
Wits University Law Clinic	011 717 8562
ZTVP/SACST (Vusi)	011 339 4476

Sophiatlwa - Barbraans

Probono

Service Gender Justice

011 614 5242

011 339 6080

011 339 3589

## **Appendix 5**

### **Information sheet and consent form for participants**

**(English language versions)**

**Title :** Psychological Healing for Victims/Survivors of Human Violations following presentation to the South African Truth and reconciliation Commission.

### **Participant Information**

You are being invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

#### ***Who will be doing the research?***

My name is Nthabiseng Anna Faku-Juqula. I am a PhD student in social work at Brunel University. I am also a qualified social worker

#### ***What is the project about?***

I am carrying out a research project on the experiences of all those people who made presentations to the Truth & Reconciliation (TRC) in South Africa. The aim of my research is to explore further into how having told their stories to the TRC has helped and provided healing to victims/survivors of human rights violations and what services were provided to support such individuals.

#### ***Who is going to participate***

I am asking Khulumani support group ( based in Gauteng and the Western Cape) to help me recruit their members who have defined by The truth & reconciliation Act 1994 as victims/survivors of human rights violations and have testified, directly or indirectly before the TRC

#### ***Do I have to take part?***

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to take part, or withdraw at any time.

#### ***What will happen if I agree to take part?***

I will come to Khulumani support group in May 2010 and meet with you. I will interview you for about one hour to one hour and a half. Before we start the interview I'll remind you about your right to withdraw at any time. The interview will be recorded. The recording will be destroyed after submission of my thesis.

#### ***What are the benefits of taking part?***

By participating you will have an opportunity to tell your story. At the end of the project

I will share the research findings with all participants, which I hope you'll find helpful. I'm sorry that I can't offer you any payment for participating in this project, however I am able to pay for your fares and lunch when you come to the interview. I hope you will find participating in this study interesting

***What are the risks if I take part?***

There is a risk that you might find that by sharing your stories with me you might recall experiences which are painful and upsetting. If this happens I'll ask if you want to suspend the interview, or if you want to withdraw. I will then refer you back to your keyworker for further support.

***Confidentiality***

Your identity and contact details and all of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be identified in my dissertation or any related report except when you have given permission and consent. In addition if you agree the transcript of your interview will be stored with Khulumani Apartheid Reparation Database (KARD) All data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and destroyed after completion of the study. *If evidence of harm or misconduct comes to light, however, in line with good research practice, confidentiality will have to be broken. I will tell you at the time if I think I need to do this, and I will let you know what will happen next.*

***Study results***

A summary of the study will be sent to Khulumani Support Group's National Contact Centre. This summary can also be sent to you if you would like.

***Contact information***

If you have any questions about this study please do not hesitate to contact me or my dissertation supervisor:

Ms. Nthabiseng Anna Faku-Juqula  
Student Social Worker  
School of Health Sciences and Social Care  
Brunel University  
swpgnfj@brunel.ac.uk  
Tel: (new sim no. to be provided in SA)

Dr. Cathy Aymer  
Senior Lecturer  
School of Health Sciences and Social  
Brunel University  
Cathy.aymer@brunel.ac.uk  
Tel: 01895 268908

This study has received ethical approval from the School of Health Sciences and Social Care Ethics Committee, Brunel University. If you have any complaints about any aspect of my conduct of the study, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee (see below for contact details). Brunel University provides indemnity insurance for student research projects. I will let you have further information if you would like it.

Ethical queries or complaints may be directed to:

Ms. Elizabeth Cassidy, Chair, Research Ethics Committee, School of Health Sciences and Social Care, Brunel University. Tel: 01895 268736; elizabeth.cassidy@brunel.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to consider the information. I hope that I've answered all your questions, and that you're willing to take part in the project or if you have any further questions please contact me using the above details.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the information. I hope that I've answered all your questions, and that you're willing to take part in the project or if you have any further questions please contact me using the above details.



**Consent Form**

The research participant should complete this sheet

	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?		
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the study?		
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At any time;</li> <li>• Without having to give a reason for withdrawing; and</li> <li>• Without affecting your future support.</li> </ul>		
I agree to my interview being recorded.		
I agree to the use of direct quotes from my interview but that I will not be named when the study is written up or published.		
Do you agree to take part in this study?		
Do you agree that the transcript of your interview be stored with KARD?		
Signature of Research Participant:		
Date:		
Name in block letters:		
Witness Statement: I am satisfied that the above-named has given informed consent.		
Witnessed by (signature):		
Date:		
Name in block letters:		

## **Appendix 6**

**Copy of poster presented to the BPS Health Psychology  
Conference, Sept 2013, Brighton.**

# Forgiveness and well-being among victims of human rights abuses who gave testimony to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): a long-term follow-up study

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Introduction	Aim	Findings	Findings	Conclusion
<p>From 1995-98, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) proposed to heal social divisions by balancing amnesty for perpetrators with reparations for victims. Perpetrators were expected to disclose their politically motivated involvement in atrocities. Victims were encouraged to reconcile themselves to this process and offer forgiveness. Those supporting the TRC process asserted that forgiveness would promote psychological healing and longer-term well-being. This qualitative study explored this claim. Some previous research has interviewed people who gave testimony to the TRC. Early studies found that some people were dissatisfied that their cases had not been adequately heard in the court, or investigated, and some questioned the offering of amnesty to perpetrators (De La Rey, 1998; Hamber, 2002). The current study has been unusual in exploring longer-term outcomes. It is unclear whether long-term, survivors feel that they have achieved forgiveness, or gained other benefits from giving testimony.</p>	<p>To explore participants' understandings of psychological healing, and extent to which they perceived psychological healing as derived from giving testimony, including the short-term and longer-term aspects of the process.</p> <p><b>Method</b></p> <p><b>Method:</b> 30 participants were interviewed by the 1<sup>st</sup> author 12-14 years after giving testimony to the TRC. Samples were recruited from two areas with different social and political histories (Gauteng and Western Cape). Participants included 9 men and 21 women, mostly aged over 50. Interviews were conducted in participants' language of preference. Participants recounted the experiences that encouraged them to give testimony to the TRC, and then reflected on the immediate and longer-term consequences of giving testimony. Transcripts were analysed using grounded theory. The findings presented here focus on the longer-term consequences.</p> <p>Contact: Nthabiseng.Faku-Juqula@brunel.ac.uk</p>	 <p>From friendsofamybiehl.com</p> <p>Most participants described on-going difficulties in expressing forgiveness to those who had inflicted such suffering. <i>'On this particular day very early in the morning we were woken up by aggressive knocking on my door and windows being shattered.. There were also loud noises outside commanding us to come out. When I got up the boys were already standing in the main corridor leading to the door. But this time the police entered and pull my uncle and the boys outside and shot at them, after they promised me they would not shoot. Me and my daughter were the only survivors of that onslaught'</i></p> 	<p>Many struggled with loss, chronic feelings of guilt, a sense of betrayal by a system that failed to offer promised reparations, and moral confusion. For example, one participant felt betrayed by promises that had been made to him that were not delivered: <i>'They said we'll all get £100,000 over 6 years especially myself as I've been so badly injured on my legs. They promised that I will get me regular physiotherapy. They asked me if I had children and when I said yes, one. Then they said he will be given appropriate education and when they asked if I had a house and when I said no I was still living at home with my mother, they said they will provide me with housing...'</i></p> <p>The women, in particular, reported health problems that they largely attributed to unresolved stress and the lack of amends (material and symbolic) for harm previously suffered. Individual, social and socioeconomic factors all contributed to these negative outcomes, as many expressed disappointment with the degree of change achieved within society.</p> <p>Sue Williamson's Truth Games series of artwork is based on the cases heard by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated human rights violations committed during the apartheid era. From: <a href="http://news.stanford.edu/news/2001/october24/iberatedvoices-1024.html">http://news.stanford.edu/news/2001/october24/iberatedvoices-1024.html</a></p>	<p>Long-term, the TRC process appears to offer tenuous healing effects. For most, forgiveness was not a meaningful 'gift' that they felt they could give as individuals when such marked social divisions and inequalities persist despite pre-TRC government promises. The interconnectedness (ubuntu) sought by the TRC process appears difficult to achieve, given such limited societal change. Longer-term, many survivors of human rights violations appear to be struggling with psychological and physical health problems. The findings contribute to critical health psychology which regards health as socially and politically situated</p>  <p><b>References</b></p> <p>Hamber, B. (2002). 'Ere their story die': truth, justice and reconciliation in South Africa. <i>Race and Class</i>, 44(1), 61-80.</p> <p>De la Rey, C., &amp; Owens, I. (1998). Perceptions of psychosocial healing and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. <i>Peace and Conflict</i>, 4(3), 257-270.</p>