

**AN EXPLORATION OF LEARNING IN A WOMEN'S  
CHURCH GROUP: A CASE STUDY OF A CATHOLIC  
WOMEN'S GROUP IN PIETERMARITZBURG REGION**

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**BY  
NTOMBENHLE CARITUS NDLELA**

**SUPERVISOR: DR AUGUSTINE ZAMOKWAKHO NHLANHLA HLELA**

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## ABSTRACT

The St Anne's Catholic Women's Group (SACWG) is an association of Catholic married women. The SACWG anticipates that its members bring together the principles of the SACWG (as taught within the group) and the realities of women in the world in which they live. However, I have seen a disjuncture and schism between the principles of what SACWG seeks to achieve and how the women live in the real world.

The study interrogated and scrutinized the types of learning that take place in the SACWG. My purpose was to explore the relationship between what was learnt within the group and the impact of that learning on women's daily lives, with a view to contributing to the theorization of adult learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning. The study was also intended to look at how women were engaging in the wider community as Christians.

The study utilized a qualitative approach and was located within the interpretative paradigm. The Case Study approach applied multiple methods of data collection, namely: observation, Focus Group and semi-structured interviews. The study was grounded in one Parish within the Pietermaritzburg region. Seven SACWG members were interviewed. Observation of a meeting session was done twice. The study was framed using the concept of Communities of Practice as its theoretical framework.

The findings reveal that there are four types of learning that take place in the SACWG, namely: the annual retreats and conventions, Tuesday and Thursday gatherings, monthly meetings and the Heritage Day celebration. Active participation of the SACWG members in these different types of learning is fundamental for knowledge creation and sharing. SACWG members are commissioned to serve in community outreach projects according to its motto, 'Serve the Family, Serve the Church, Serve the Community'. Members seem to turn a blind eye to the principle of '...her obligations towards God, family as well as the neighbour', including '...serve the community at large.' Non-formal learning and informal learning stimulate SACWG learning. None of the SACWG members resides in Wozanawe Informal Settlement (WIS), the neighbour of the St Kuhle Parish (SKP), thus a distance between the SACWG, the church and the WIS is evident. The findings confirm my initial view of a disjuncture between the principles of what the SACWG seeks to achieve and the real world in which members live in.

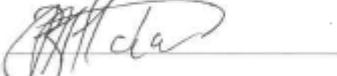
## DECLARATION

I, Ntombenhle Caritus Ndlela, declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Ntombenhle Caritus Ndlela



Dr Augustine Zamokwakho Hlela

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AIKS	African Indigenous Knowledge Systems
AIL	African Indigenous Learning
CoP	Communities of Practice
EL	Experiential Learning
FGI	Focus Group Interview
FM	Full Member
II	Individual Interview
IL	Informal Learning
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
NFL	Non-formal learning
PP	Parish Priest
SA	Spiritual Advisor
SACWG	St Anne's Catholic Women's Group
SKP	St Kuhle Parish
SL	Situated Learning
ST	Sodwana Township
WIS	Wozanawe Informal Settlement

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## THE PROLOGUE

I grew up as a member of the Catholic Church, with strong Christian values which were powerful and were able to shape the characters of church goers. As a woman, I wish to deepen my Christianity, which will assist me to nurture my children in the faith. I am married under the Catholic doctrines. I am blessed with four children – one daughter and three sons. I am also a grandmother of five grandchildren.

During my adulthood, I have been enthusiastic about partaking in church activities. I envisaged that it would be beneficial for me to join a sodality within the church, particularly a women's group. There are quite a number of sodalities in the Catholic Church to choose from. Eventually I decided to become a member of the St Anne's Catholic Women's Group (SACWG). Anne was the mother of Mary, who gave birth to our Lord, Jesus Christ. She plays an important role in the Catholic liturgy. This is an association of Catholic married women. Group members are devoted to Saint Anne in drawing strength and inspiration from her as patroness of women. St Anne was a model of love, loyalty, care and concern.

I had to follow the procedure of how to become a member of the sodality. I first became an aspirant, that is, the requester and an observer for a period of three months. I then proceeded to another stage, the probationer. I trained in this stage for nine months. I eventually became a full-time member. I liked the SACWG, because it is a strong support group for its associates and a dominant resource for the church. Children become witnesses of the active faith of their mothers. Parents are the first teachers of faith, by bringing up their children as Christians and apostles, and helping them in their vocation in life. Members of a group are encouraged to stay connected to one another in order to maintain a sense of community within the group.

The SACWG members are committed to assist their families, and the church, as well as the community at large. Members assist one another emotionally, physically and spiritually. However, this spirit of *ubuntu* (humanism) seems to be fading at both the community and the SACWG level. In my view, there is a disjuncture between the aims of SACWG members and how they live out these aims in the world. For me, it is crucial to conduct a study regarding this schism in order to explore the effectiveness of SACWG learning because the data collected was bias free.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction and background of the study

This qualitative research study is located in an interpretivist paradigm. The research style was a case study, and data generation techniques included semi structured interviews, focussed groups and document analysis. The research site was St Kuhle Parish (not real name), and the research sample came from the St Anne's Catholic Women's Group (SACWG). The theoretical framework that informed the study was Communities of Practice (CoP). Data analysis was both deductive and inductive. The key findings of the study were mainly dependent on the types of learning that take place in SACWG. The themes of the study were derived from the research questions. Findings revealed that non-formal learning and informal learning motivate SACWG learning. Not even one SACWG member resides in Wozanawe Informal Settlement (WIS), thus a distance between SACWG, the church and the WIS is evident. The recommendations that the study makes, include recommendations related to the content of the study as well as recommendations for further study. This chapter introduces the background of the study. It outlines the statement of the problem; the focus, purpose and objectives of the study; the rationale of the study; the research site and the research questions. These will be followed by a section that summarises each chapter of the dissertation.

In the newly democratic South Africa, a trend on the increased number of Pentecostal churches has been observed. This fast-growing phenomenon has given rise to different types of churches emerging, apart from the traditional churches such as Catholic, African Zion, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican or Lutheran. In the South African context, religion has played and performed different functions in our history. During the apartheid era, church demonstrated a significant role in justifying the existence of apartheid. Furthermore, it played a significant role in ensuring that Africans, as people, understood themselves as lesser people but who were also loved by God. Between 1970 and 1980 there was a split between the white and black church in relation to the purpose of church. Then, post-apartheid, particularly during the Mandela era, the church played a fundamental role in promoting the rainbow nation concept coined by Bishop Desmond Tutu. Similarly, during the Mandela era, racial amalgamation and social interrelation, became the curriculum of the church with indispensable talking about economic equivalence. Now, in the present South Africa, the church is vocal about issues unfolding leadership and the scarcity of leadership (Vicencio, 1996). It must therefore be recognised that

church offers public service of worshiping and also an environment where people can discuss matters pertaining to social, economic and political matters.

St Kuhle Parish (SKP) is the research site and it is about 4 kilometres (km) away from Pietermaritzburg, in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands. St Kuhle Parish is the only church for this community. SKP is well secured, with a high fence all round and lockable gates. SKP is situated right at the boundary of Wozanawe Informal Settlement (WIS – not its real name). Church is something relevant to human beings and a unique place that aims at instilling change in people's lives. The church provides services, counselling and support to the congregants, and to those in need, and can act as a public service to the surrounding communities. It is crucial for churches to be transparent within their communities (UNESCO, 2009). People feel safe and secure if they have a church in their neighbourhood. Believers assemble in a church since it is a place of worshipping. Church offers theology in social, economic and political settings (Ratzinger, 2017). People gather in the church especially on Sundays with the intention of worshipping and praising God.

People occupy shacks in WIS, which is vulnerable to social ills, such as unemployment, poverty, substance abuse and crime. A shack is a small, roughly-built hut which is used as a dwelling. These shacks are classified as low-income urban households where some people are struggling to make ends meet in their everyday lives (UNESCO, 2009). WIS is about 2 km away from SKP. There are many shack dwellers in WIS. Shack dwellers are the people who occupy the shacks. WIS is densely populated because people are sharing their dwellings with their relatives and children. In most cases people stay with their partners, that is, partners live together without being married. The next section demonstrates the relationship between the church and WIS.



**Figure 1: St Kuhle Parish and the neighbouring Wozanawe Informal Settlement (Internet source)**

The above figure demonstrates the difference between SKP and the depressing condition of WIS. WIS is in the heart of the city of Pietermaritzburg. People experience the problem of having only one tap to serve scores of households and toilets are in a bad condition (Biyela, 2012). The area has been overwhelmed with fires that jump from house to house. These fires have forced some people to live in tents on a local sports field. People exercise illegal electricity connection. It is believed that the cause of the fires is due to the number of illegal connections found throughout the informal settlement. These connections have therefore led to the death of people in the area. People are electrocuted when they come into contact with live electric wires. Children are also being electrocuted whilst playing. Children are likely to trip and fall on the exposed wires which are called *izinyoka* (McKane, 2016).

This research project focuses on St Anne's Catholic Women's Group (SACWG). The Catholic church uses the SACWG as one of its pillars to mobilize taking the Gospel to the church as well as to the community. The women's group is comprised of married women only. In order to affiliate to the women's group, the women need to learn and understand the principles and the motto of the domain. The statement of the problem in this study is discussed below.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The church, St Kuhle Parish (SKP) is located on the footsteps of an informal settlement called Wozanawe Informal Settlement (WIS). Many social ills of the society are evident in WIS, which include poverty, ill-health, prostitution, and hooliganism, to name but a few (McKane, 2016). The SACWG members, as married women, are taught Christian values such as love, care, neighbourliness as well as the principles and motto of SACWG (Handbook, 2014). According to the Handbook (2014), there are three principles that underpin SACWG learning, namely: "the personal formation and sanctification of its members; mutual prayer and support so as to enable each one to fulfil her obligations towards God, her family and her neighbour and the active participation of the members in the mission of the Church. The motto being: serve the family; serve the church and serve the community." I feel that members ignore the principle "...her obligations towards God, family as well as the neighbour" including the motto "...serve the community at large" (Handbook, 2014, p. 11). I believe that there is little, or almost non-existent awareness of their neighbours. I am eager to understand the nature of SACWG learning and its impact on the members' lives.

My concern regarding this phenomenon as a researcher is that there is a disjuncture and schism between the principles of what SACWG members seek to achieve and what actually happens

in the world that members live in. The section below indicates the focus and purpose of the study.

### **1.3 Focus and purpose of the study**

The study focussed on understanding the types of learnings that took place in one sodality in particular SACWG. The purpose of the study was therefore to explore the relationship between what was learned within the group and how that impacted on the SACWG members' lives. The study was also interested in looking at how women were engaging in the wider community as Christians. The objectives of the study are tabulated in the next section.

### **1.4 The objectives of the study**

The objectives of this research study are:

- To bring together the principles of SACWG as learnt within the group and the real world SACWG members live in.
- To apply what is learnt in the SACWG to the world members live in.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following three main questions:

- (i) What is the nature and process of learning that takes place in the SACWG?
- (ii) How does learning impact the lives of the SACWG members?
- (iii) What are the perceptions of the women in the SACWG regarding their learning experiences?

### **1.6 Rationale**

In this section I will present three reasons why this research study is relevant. These are my personal beliefs, the manner in which learning is participatory, and how this effects various stakeholders.

### ***1.6.1 Personal Beliefs***

In the prologue, I stated clearly the reasons that prompted me to engage with this study. Firstly, I am a married woman, a wife and a parent. Secondly, I am a member of the SACWG. This organisation is a critical component of my personal life, as it provides for the facilitation of Christian principles and values amongst married women, but it is not beyond reproach. It is a human creation and therefore can be open to abuse. It is possible that it has lost its prescribed focus of the intended goals. Important for me as a SACWG member and a researcher, is to understand how we as members learn within the group and among ourselves, and how that learning impacts our lives.

### ***1.6.2 Learning through participation***

The drive or push that motivates members to learn prompted me to investigate this learning. The shack dwellers, that is, people living in the squatter camp are living under the poverty line. However, being surrounded by the church and Christians, gives them hope that their lives will change drastically. It is clear therefore that SACWG members are required to practise what they are learning in a real context. This study is vital since it will reveal whether the women's group is adhering to the principles they are trying to achieve or not. Their participation in learning will be demonstrated if they are implementing what they are learning within the group to the community at large.

### ***1.6.3 The significance of the study to different stakeholders***

Given the inadequacy of literature in South Africa on the effectiveness of churchwomen's groups' learning, it is hoped that the findings derived from this study will expand researchers' understanding of learning in a women's group, and its impacts on women's lives in their daily lives. In addition, the study will provide some insights regarding the importance of women's group learning within the church context and its effectiveness in the world they live in. Furthermore, it is believed that the insights gained from the study will provide the SACWG leadership with an opportunity to voice their suggestions. These will contribute to a broader collaboration of women's groups, churches and communities as well as government structures which will strengthen community development and fighting against social ills. The findings will enable the SACWG coordinators to revise the training materials for SACWG learning if necessary, bearing in mind the women's faith and their real world. It is also anticipated that such findings will be of interest to the body of knowledge of Catholic social teaching programmes as well as of Adult Education programmes.

While writing the literature review for this study, it became clear that this area is often researched from a religious and theological perspective. Very limited studies have explored religion from an educational perspective (Gaskin, 2017). It is clear therefore that there has been very limited exploration of the church as a place of learning. In my humble opinion, the study will be a contribution for different stakeholders within the Catholic Church. I believe that the SACWG as a formation, will get to understand itself better through adhering to its Handbook teachings and its different types of learning.

## **1.7 Research Site**

The study took place at St Kuhle Parish (not real name). This Parish is situated about 4 kilometres (km) away from Pietermaritzburg. The Parish is made up of different group formations with individualised purposes. The groups include ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus’ (SHJ). The purpose of this group is to demonstrate that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is supportive and protective and trustworthy. Membership is made up of both females and males, married or single. ‘Legion of Mary’ is also a group in SKP. Its purpose is to motivate youth to mirror Mary, who was the mother of Jesus, and to live a spiritual life giving support to other people. Membership is made up of females only, married and or single. Each group has its responsibilities to perform according to its doctrines.

According to the Handbook (2014), the Parish is under the leadership of the Parish Priest (PP), who is an ordained Minister administering most of the sacraments, including Eucharist, Baptism, Matrimony, Confirmation, Penance, the Anointing of the sick, and Holy Orders. The PP is committed to serve the congregation within a particular religious order.

St Kuhle Parish is well secured. There is also a church hall on the premises, and houses for the Priests and brothers who dwell in the premises including the kitchen and the dining areas. There are also classrooms at the back of the church where lessons take place for catechists (Catholic Sunday School), Roman Catholic Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and SACWG, including lessons for various sodalities. The church is a busy place especially during weekends. Weddings and sometimes funerals take place in the church, especially on Saturdays. Mass celebrations take place on Sundays at 10H00 and the duration of the service is approximately 2 hours. The church walls are made out of red bricks. All the buildings on the premises are also made out of bricks. There is a big white cross above the church door which faces onto the main road, Barnes Road, which leads to Sodwana Township, consisting of factories, hospital, a mall and so forth. There is a bus stop in front of the parish. People use

buses, cars, and taxis as a means of transport to and from the church. The ablution facilities are also made out of bricks. There is a river on the side of the church. There is also a garage, supermarket and a confectionery shop next to the church.

The majority of the church's congregants reside in Sodwana Township (not real name) which is about 6 km away from St Kuhle Parish. Some of congregants live in town and its surroundings, while there are no SACWG members who live at the Wozanawe Informal Settlement (WIS). I, a researcher and a member, live in Wake-up Township which is about 4 km away from SKP.

The church is surrounded by the Wozanawe Informal Settlement (WIS – not real name). The shack dwellers are classified as marginalized people who live in poverty. They find it difficult to earn a living and the majority of residents is unemployed (McKane, 2016).

## **1.8 Limitations of the study**

There are three major limitations identified in this study.

Firstly, this case study research was conducted in one Parish in the Pietermaritzburg Region or Deanery focussing on one SACWG. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to a whole region.

Secondly, I, as a researcher, attend the same church and I am a member of the SACWG. In the prologue I present my positionality, and throughout the research process I have tried to adhere to key trustworthiness factors as dictated by the interpretivist paradigm.

Thirdly, the majority of SACWG members are very old. SACWG membership has a majority of senior individuals (above sixty years old). Attempts to get younger participants have been made with no success as there are no younger members in the parish. It would be fruitful to get views and perspectives of the young ones and compare them with those of the old ones. The next section gives the outline of the study.

## **1.9 Outline of the Dissertation**

The study is comprised of five chapters. A brief outline of each chapter of the study is given below:

**Chapter One** provides the introduction of the study. It also provides the focus, purpose, objectives, rationale, research site, research questions and finally the limitations of the study.

**Chapter Two** provides the key concepts, the review of the literature and related studies as well as the presentation of the theoretical framework of the study.

**Chapter Three** presents the research design and methodology of the study. The utilization of qualitative research with a case study style is discussed. This entails information on the sample and on its selection criteria and data collection methods. Observation, focus and semi-structured interviews are discussed. The data analysis process and issues of trustworthiness are illustrated, followed by the explanation of ethical issues pertaining to this study.

**Chapter Four** presents the findings and discusses them in relation to the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The discussions are organized according to the three themes which are derived from the research questions, namely: the nature and process of learning that takes place in a Catholic Women's Group; the impact of SACWG learning on women's lives, and the perceptions of Women's Groups about their learning experiences.

**Chapter Five** which is the last chapter, concludes the study by presenting the summary, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

Five aspects providing a background to the study, were discussed in this chapter, namely: the introduction and understanding of SACWG within the Catholic Church context; the focus, purpose, objectives and the identification of research questions; the rationale for undertaking the study including the significance of the study to different stakeholders and the background of the research site. Finally, the discussion of limitations of the study and the presentation of the outline of the dissertation were provided. The next chapter will present the literature review together with the explanation of the theoretical framework for this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the last chapter, a presentation of the background and the introduction of the study was done by putting emphasis on the focus, purpose and objectives of the study together with the research questions. This was followed by the rationale and the significance of the study to different stakeholders. The research site, methods of data collection, the scope and limitations of the study, as well as an outline of the entire dissertation were discussed. In addition, I need to introduce how the SACWG members are taught about the principles and motto of the group together with their Christian values. However, I see a disjuncture and schism between the principles and motto of what SACWG members seek to achieve, and how they live in the world as members.

This chapter discusses key concepts, related studies and the theoretical framework. Lysaght (2011), has drawn attention to the fact that literature reviews are designed to offer an overview of sources one has discovered while researching a particular topic and to indicate to one's reader how one's research fits within a larger field of study. Furthermore, Lovitts (2005) has argued that the purpose of such a review is to reveal any gaps that exist in the literature and to place each work in the context of its contribution to understanding the research problem being studied. It is clear therefore that the literature review is pivotal in any research field. The purpose of this chapter is to interrogate the key concepts which inform my study and to demonstrate what other studies have already been done in the religion and adult learning field, thus identifying the gap that my study will fill. The chapter begins with the four key concepts.

### **2.2 Learning**

In this section, I would like to deepen the understanding of learning. Learning is vital, especially in the case of the Women's Group in this study, as it helps them spiritually and emotionally through the Word of God. They tend to gather, share bible verses, learn about the group's culture, the church doctrines and to support each other whenever there is a necessity. Learning is a change in behaviour. In this study of learning, it was perceived as adult learning since SACWG members were adults and were embarked in this learning. As Hill observes, "there are orientations that present different assumptions about learning which offer insights

into adult learning, namely: behaviourist, constructivist, transformative, Afrocentric and social cognitive” (2002, p. 86). It would seem that these orientations are fundamental in scrutinizing learning. The next section presents these five orientations.

### ***2.2.1 Learning in Behaviourist Theory***

Behaviour can be observed. This theory states firstly that learning focuses on observable behaviour. According to Skinner, “behaviour is easily influenced by the environment. Reinforcement and punishment are direct causes of behaviour” (2001, p. 101). It is clear therefore that learning takes place in behaviour and not in mind. Furthermore, Skinner talks about radical behaviourism, saying that “it departs from methodological behaviourism which accepts treatment of feelings, states of mind and introspection. Initially feelings were perceived as the root cause of behaviour, however, radical behaviourism changed that. All behaviour is influenced by the environment through association, reinforcement and punishments which are the root causes of behaviour” (2001, p. 110). It is the view of Hill (2002) that the behaviourists consider both the learner and the environment as relevant factors. It is the view of Bandura (1986) that observers cannot learn unless they pay attention to what is taking place around them and that human development relies on the compound interaction of the person, the person’s behaviour and the environment. It is clear therefore that behaviour and environment are crucial in observational learning. The next section discusses learning as seen in constructivist theory.

### ***2.2.2 Learning in Constructivist Theory***

Learning is an ongoing process. Constructivist theory perceives learning as a process rather than a product. According to Bandura, “it focuses on what happens when learning takes place. During learning, each learner, individually and socially, constructs meaning” (1986, p. 59). It is clear therefore that construction of knowledge means learning. More people engage themselves in learning, the more knowledge they acquire. Likewise, Bandura mentions that, “learning is understanding a personal and social construction of meaning” (1986, p. 113). It is clear therefore that knowledge consists of learning about the real world. Werquin (2007) believes that it is the responsibility of the individuals to search for meaning in order for learning to take place. Individuals can construct their own meaning through learning. Thus it could be concluded that learners take full responsibility of their learning. In the same way, Vygotsky states that “the learner is assisted to understand the world. He is not asked to construct his own world. Learning is the process of creating new knowledge on the basis of what you already know thus learning is mingled with experience” (1997, p. 102). On this basis it may be inferred that

learners are taught in order to acquire knowledge. Dillon (2003) has drawn attention to the fact that knowledge is in the human mind. On this basis it may be inferred that learners are taught in order to acquire knowledge. Experiences are the basis of learning, and learners will always update their minds as soon as they identify new experiences. Furthermore, Tam claims that “students learn to question things and to apply their natural curiosity to the world. Constructivism promotes social and communication skills since it emphasizes collaboration and exchange of ideas” (2000, p. 52). The indications are therefore that interaction, knowledge sharing and working collaboratively on group projects is pivotal. As we learn, we are creating our own meaning. The next section explains transformative learning.

### ***2.2.3 Learning as Transformative***

Learning transforms people as they learn. The third orientation listed by Hill (2002) views learning as transformative. Mezirow looks at learning “as a process of making a new or revised interpretation of an experience (2000, p. 66). Mezirow (2000) states that adults possess habits of perceiving, thinking, remembering; problem-solving that have been acquired during a lifetime. He further highlighted that learning can be classified as everyday learning, and intentional or deliberate learning where learners are aware that they are learning, goals are identified, and these become the reasons why learning is undertaken” It is clear therefore that the learner can attain critical thinking skills which she/he can retain and use for a considerable period of time.

It is the view of Mezirow (1998) that transformative learning theory looks at how individuals can be empowered to learn and to think critically on their own. The indications are therefore that people learn in order to acquire knowledge and betterment, which enhance transformation. People find themselves motivated to learn in order to become powerful in making essential decisions pertaining to their lives. Thus transformation is vital for social change.

Experiences are fundamental in meaning-making. As Mezirow comments that “transformation is about how we make meaning of our experiences through the frames of reference we develop as we become adults” (1998, p. 52). Turning to Mezirow (1998), one finds that disorienting dilemmas are the animated promoters in transformational learning. Those unexpected incidents are pivotal in attaining the new frames of reference which are significant for learning. Feelings can be experienced including feeling lost, confused, disconnected or even disoriented during incidents. These feelings affect the habits of mind. Thus it could be concluded that people interpret their experiences according to their contexts.

The Women's Group learning is embedded in the spiritual guidance based on the Christian faith. According to English, "learning is also intertwined with participatory learning, diversity, indigenous knowing and spiritual underpinnings" (2008, p. 77). Thus, participation in learning and in performing tasks is pivotal. Learning mobilizes people for transformation. The work of Livingstone (2001) reveals that when people attain knowledge through a critical and transformative nature, they are engaging themselves in learning. It is clear therefore that learning leads to transformation. The next section discusses African perspectives to learning.

#### **2.2.4 Afrocentric Learning**

The fourth example of learning, views learning through African perspectives. This example is given by Hlela: "The Afrocentric view of learning is a process of becoming *umuntu*" (2018, p. 44). In the same way, Ramose views Afrocentric learning as "the attainment of two critical aspects of life, that is, to be a member (*umuntu*) and living together in the context of *Ubuntu*" (2002, p. 80). It is clear therefore that *Ubuntu* is vital for learning and it is a good characteristic of Afrocentric learning. In addition, Merriam & Kim (2008, p. 79) and Ntseane (2007, p. 47) have found that, "the holistic view of learning entails collective values, culture, customs and traditions, including lifelong and informal, holistic or spiritual collectivism." It must therefore be recognised that learning is universal, since cultures, values, and customs are learnt from the elders.

In the same way, Ngara *et al.* comment, "reality and truth is perceived as universal (ontology), that is, interconnected, interdependent and spirituality" (2011, p. 60). They go on to refer to ontology as a way of viewing reality as a holistic view of life, the interconnectedness of all things and spirituality. It is informed by context and culture. Similarly, Ramose, views epistemology as the "interaction of the body, mind and spirituality in meaning-making, that is, diunital logic" (2002, p. 74). Thus, it can be concluded that epistemology is the way of acquiring knowledge. According to Ngara, "epistemology is the oneness of mind, body and spirit in meaning making" (2007, p. 67). In addition, Ngara writes, "in order to get a more complete and realistic understanding of the world we need each other" (2007, p. 68). It is clear therefore that in order for this knowledge-gaining to happen, we need each other (*siyadingana*).

Hlela (2014) found that this kind of learning is embedded in real life. People can be aware or unaware of this learning. In the same breath, Chilisa and Preece pointed out that, "for an African person, *Ubuntu* values, 'I am because you are' (interconnectedness and interdependence) of all things living, dead and yet to be born, become truth" (2005, p. 79).

Pietersen (2005) believes that what is good for the group will eventually be good for the individual. The next session introduces social learning.

### **2.2.5 Social Learning**

The fifth example related to this study is social learning. “This is significant to knowledge that characterizes human interaction, communication and collaboration” (Zeng, Wang, and Carley, 2007, p. 81). Bandura emphasises that social learning “is useful in witnessing behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions of other people. It is more about human behaviour and involves cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences, it is the continuous process of learning from other people, by observing them, asking questions, and sharing knowledge resources” (1977. p. 78). Thus, it can be concluded that social learning can manifest itself everywhere and anywhere and learning can be of an informal nature. Habermas mentions that “adults are likely to have the attitudes and customs appropriate to the groups they belong in” (1987, p. 45). When considering these explanations, it can be seen that SACWG members are also the beneficiaries of social learning. Socialization, observation and questioning take part among members.

This section above, providing five definitions of learning, highlights the fact that learning is a complex and is often described in a very limited fashion in relation to its theoretical orientation. Learning as defined in Behaviourist Theory highlights the formation of associations between specific actions and specific events (stimuli) in environment. Learning is embedded in behaviour, not in the mind. Bush has found that, “the observable and measurable outward behaviour is significant for scientific inquiry” (2006, p. 69). Environmental influences play an important role in determining that all students can learn.

Learning in Constructivist Theory highlights that learners construct knowledge individually and socially as they learn. Learning consists of learning about the real world.

Transformative learning refers to how we make meaning of our experiences. Experiences are vital for meaning making. People learn to interpret their experiences according to their frames of reference.

African perspectives to learning demonstrate the process of becoming *umuntu*, shaping an individual to such an extent that one becomes aware of the Afrocentric view of learning, where becoming *umuntu*, a member and living together in the context of *Ubuntu* is interwoven. This includes values, culture, customs and traditions as well as lifelong and informal learning.

Finally, social learning is relevant in supporting the modelling of human social behaviour. Human interaction, communication and collaboration are considered to be greatly important. This learning is powerful in observing the behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. The root causes of human behaviours are monitored, as these can have impact on human behaviour. The next section locates learning in three different conceptions, namely: formal, informal and non-formal learning.

### 2.3 Conceptions of Learning

According to Werquin (2007) there are three conceptions of learning which are illustrated in the table below.

**Table 1: Conceptions of learning**

<b>FORMAL LEARNING</b>	<b>NON-FORMAL LEARNING</b>	<b>INFORMAL LEARNING</b>
<p>Intentional, organized and structured.</p> <p>Has structured learning objectives and expected outcomes.</p> <p>Guided by a curriculum.</p> <p>Leads to qualification/certification.</p> <p>Has summative assessment/accreditation.</p> <p>It is teacher-controlled (Werquin, 2007).</p>	<p>May or may not be intentional or arranged by an institution, it is loosely organized.</p> <p>No formal credits granted.</p> <p>Not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification.</p> <p>Success is measured not in terms of how much people have learned but how well they have mastered the task.</p> <p>People learn a lot in the process (Werquin, 2007).</p>	<p>Not organized.</p> <p>Often classified as experiential learning.</p> <p>Lacks intention and objectives.</p> <p>The most unplanned type of learning (Werquin, 2007).</p>
<p>Intentional from both learner's and institution's perspectives (UNESCO, 2009).</p>	<p>Structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support.</p> <p>Does not lead to certification (UNESCO, 2009).</p>	<p>Typically does not lead to certification.</p> <p>No learning objectives, learning time or learning support.</p> <p>Non-targeted learning, it just happens.</p> <p>People learn from daily experiences, daily life activities including work, family, leisure, and so forth</p> <p>It is frequently unconscious (UNESCO, 2009).</p>

With reference to Table 1 above, I now ascertain that both non-formal and informal learning conceptions are relevant to my study since both non-formal and informal learning, according to Werquin (2007), are not provided by an education or training institution and typically do not lead to certification. Informal learning is a crucial part of social learning where people learn the attitudes and customs of groups or societies they belong to. In the next section, I explain one of the most dominant adult learning theories, Andragogy.

## **2.4 Adult Learning Theory – Andragogy**

In this section, I discuss Andragogy, which is different to pedagogy since it is designed for teaching adults. According to the European Commission, adult learning is broadly defined as “purposeful and directed learning undertaken by adults, either alone or in groups to increase knowledge and skills, and /or change behaviours, value or beliefs” (2005, p. 115). Furthermore, Knowles (1988) visualizes adults learning differently to children. Andragogy is vital since it is the model which is utilized in an informal or non-formal nature. Adults are assisted to learn by the teacher who facilitates the learning process. Likewise, Knowles and Swanson point out that “adult learners need to know how learning takes place, what kind of learning and why Andragogy is substantial and self-directed learning, where learners control the learning techniques and the learning purpose” (1998, p. 33). It is clear therefore that learners first envisage a need for learning to act upon.

Adults need to be inspired to learn. They can identify their learning needs and can formulate objectives as well. Prior experience plays an important role in influencing learning and providing self-identity to individuals. Andragogy is more about acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes (Knowles, 1988). It is clear therefore that people can keep on learning as long as they have intrinsic motivation to learn.

Furthermore, Brookfield, mentions that “self-directed learning focusses on the process by which adults take full control of their learning” (1995, p. 25). They have the potential to eventually evaluate their progress. The study focusses on the impacts of learning on the Women’s Group and which Mezirow thinks of as “transformation of women through their learning. Andragogy as the process model of adult learning indicates that adults can and will learn if certain conditions exist. A strong desire to learn motivates them to learn” (1991, p. 46). Thus, it could be concluded that their progress is mainly dependent on their effort to learn. They are aware that tenacity brings success.

Adult learners become part of the planning of sessions. According to Laird, “facilitation caters for the needs of learners. Both the learner and the facilitator are involved in evaluation, thus confirming that the evaluation is a mutual process. Mutuality is displayed throughout the programme, respect for one another is maintained including the effective collaborative effort” (1998, p. 46).

Merriam *et al.* further critique the assumptions by stating that “the assumptions are characteristics of adult learners as some adults are highly dependent on a teacher for structure, while some children are independent, self-directed learners as adults may be externally motivated to learn. Adults have more and deeper life experiences may or may not function positively in a learning situation” (1996, p. 73). It is clear therefore that other life experiences can act as barriers to learning while some can motivate adults to learn.

Furthermore, Merriam (2007) has noted that andragogy has its principles, namely:- adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction; experiences provide the basis for learning accomplishments; adults are most interested in learning subjects that are relevant to their occupation or personal life; adult learning is problem-centred rather than content-oriented. Andragogy is relevant for this study since the learning in the SACWG is governed by its principles and assumptions as well as experiences. Andragogy is very self-directed since it allows the learner to take control of his/her learning. Adult learners have a range of expectations. To quote from Merriam those assumptions are: “self-concept: adults can direct their own learning; past learning experience: adults have a vast of experiences to draw on as they learn; readiness to learn: adults visualize the value of education and are ready to focus on learning; practical reasons to learn: adults are interested in practical, problem-centred approaches to learning; driven by internal motivation: adults are more internally motivated” (2001, p. 123). It is clear therefore that adults are motivated intrinsically to learn, that they have special needs to learn and that their learning must be of a learner-centred nature.

Similarly, Blondy states that Andragogy has principles such as: “adults are self-directed: they are expected to have a say in the content and process of their learning; they have more experience to draw from: their learning adds to what they have already learned in the past; adults are interested in practical learning: content must include issues related to their work or personal life; learning should be centred on problem-solving” (2007, p. 59). On this basis it may be inferred that, since adults are people who have experienced many things, their learning is sometimes drawn from those experiences. The next section expands on Adult Education. It

will be followed by a presentation of different conceptualisations of Adult Education, including the conceptions of lifelong education with the purpose of seeking to define types of learning that emanate from a women’s church group.

## 2.5 Adult Education

Merriam and Brockett claim that, “Adult education lies within the notion of adult activities designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles and self-perception define them as adults” (1997, p. 64). Furthermore, Jarvis (1995) presents different forms of adult education such as lifelong education together with its conceptions. These are continuing education, recurrent education, community education and the learning society. Below is a table indicating the three contexts of Adult education, this is different from the previous one since this table displays the contexts of Adult Education whereas the previous one was dealing with the conceptions of learning. These are two different concepts, Education and learning.

**Table 2: Adult Education Contexts according to the World Bank (2019)**

<b>Formal Education</b>	<b>Non-formal Education</b>	<b>Informal Education</b>
Structured learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Takes place in an education or training institution</li> <li>- Having a set curriculum and</li> <li>- Carries credentials</li> </ul>	Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized by educational institutions</li> <li>- Non credential</li> <li>- Opportunities may be provided in the workplace and</li> <li>- Through the activities of civil society organizations and groups</li> </ul>	Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Goes on all the time</li> <li>- Resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, community or leisure (e.g. community baking class).</li> </ul>

The above table illustrates the three contexts of Adult Education. Adults engage in this form of education in order to accomplish new forms of knowledge and skills in order to improve working or living conditions (World Bank, 2019).

There is also African Indigenous Learning (AIL) which is also a type of Adult Education. AIL can be formal, informal and non-formal. AIL is designed to provide health and good knowledge about the community’s history, beliefs and attitudes. According to Lekoko and Modise (2011), AIL is significant in the production of human person (*umuntu*). People learn quickly in their vernacular. The next section presents Adult Education from an African Perspective.

### ***2.5.1 Adult Education from an African Perspective***

Adult education in the West and in African countries is different. Arthur (2001), states that traditional Ghanaian programmes of Adult Education take place in the home, with parents and other family members as trainers. Adult Education programmes in the West take place in the form of workshops, seminars and training institutions or colleges and are designed to improve the individual's professional competence and enhance the individual's self-esteem. Traditional life including Education in African countries, such as Ghana, is promoted by activities, habits, beliefs and behaviour. Westerners would view this as religion. It is clear therefore that Adult Education is treated differently in Western and African countries. People perceive Adult Education differently.

Furthermore, Nuckles (2004) pointed out that adult learners are more likely to engage themselves in the problem-solving process. To quote from Wang, "if the objective of Adult Education is only to convey culture and social structure to stimulate social change and to advance individuals open to change and continued learning, then it is appropriate for adult educators to be humanistic and progressive" (2003, p. 77). They can serve as learning facilitators because they assume that adult learners tend to be self-directed. Educators tend to view adult learners as highly motivated and self-directed. Adult learners seek knowledge rather than information." Adult learners want to learn what they aim to learn.

African knowledge systems have always aimed to create a natural balance to ensure sustainability. Scholars of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) such as Lekoko and Modise feel that "language is not only a tool of communication, however, a carrier of culture, heritage and tradition" (2011, p. 62). Language plays a crucial role in preserving and developing people' personality and identity. Language is a custodian of culture. People use language to express the knowledge found within indigenous knowledge systems. Women play an important role in AIKS through the nurturing of children. Women are regarded as the creators of knowledge. It is clear that women have the capability of teaching their children in their mother-tongue. To quote from the SACWG Handbook, "parents are the teachers of faith by bringing up their children as Christians and apostles..." (2014: 18). Their teaching is embedded in their vernacular. The next session presents an understanding of the concept of Lifelong Education.

### **2.5.2 Lifelong Education**

This entails learning for life. Field (2001) makes clear that lifelong education is crucial for peace development, citizenship and civic involvement. Field (2006) and Antunes (2008) have drawn attention to the fact that national adult education policies are solely dependent on lifelong learning guidelines. Furthermore, Morgan-Klein and Osborne mention “the value of investment in human capital, revealing the importance of lifelong learning to economic development” (2007, p. 72). According to Hewitt, “lifelong learning concerns learning over the lifespan, including learning outside formal educational institutions, without the guidance of an academic curriculum and formal guidance” (2005, p. 96). Based on these illustrations, lifelong learning is learning throughout life for the benefits of the learner. Such learning is non-formal and informal, and outside formal educational systems. To quote from Osborne *et al.*, “People learn to in order to entail social inclusion and self-improvement, citizenship and flexibility” (2015, p. 76). It is clear therefore that lifelong learning is mainly dependent on motivation to learn.

SACWG members are motivated intrinsically or extrinsically to affiliate to the group. Lifelong learning in society has been perceived as part of the current economic and political conditions (Jarvis, 2000). Training programmes are offered to develop people especially at the workplace. As Aspin and Chapman point out, “there are three aspects of lifelong learning, namely: lifelong learning for economic progress and development; lifelong learning for personal development and fulfilment and lifelong learning for social inclusiveness and democratic understating and activity” (2001, p. 59). It must therefore be recognised that these aspects are crucial to a human being since they touch the life of a human being as a whole.

Furthermore, Goodson *et al.* assert that, “lifelong learning is the learning that goes on throughout one’s life, it takes place beyond the initial phase of formal education, it has to do with the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in relation to the world of work” (2010, p. 68). The Lifelong Learning Institute (2018) correctly argues that lifelong learners dedicate themselves to learn through their intrinsic motivation and that learning is carefully planned. Adults consider their learning as vital, thus enhancing their desire to learn and attain betterment. It must therefore be recognised that this learning is mainly embedded in the aspect of lifelong learning for personal development and fulfilment, where people strive to uplift themselves throughout their lives. The next section defines continuing education as part of lifelong education.

### ***2.5.2.1 Continuing Education***

Adult learners need to know and understand the benefits of their continuing education. Upon completion of some programmes, adults can get promotions or can even perform better at work. Creswell and Mille (2000) believe that continuing education programmes can be regarded as short courses which are offered after hours to individuals interested. Some courses are formal (credit-bearing) and others are non-formal or informal (non-credit-bearing). Continuing education encourages individuals to be innovative, flexible and interested to lifelong learning opportunities (COM Continuing Education, 2019). Thus, it can be concluded that this education helps people to become change agents in their communities and in their lives. Continuing education utilizes distance education in order to make it easier for anyone who is willing to learn. There is no age limit. The next section presents recurrent education.

### ***2.5.2.2 Recurrent Education***

Adults can engage themselves in this type of education. According to Winter, recurrent education is regarded as “the education for people who are employed or unemployed. People can return at intervals to the organized learning. Recent developments in recurrent education relate to educational policy making, changes in the educational system and supporting socio-economic policies” (1973, p. 65). Furthermore, Manfred (1980) stated that recurrent education is a widespread educational strategy because it dispenses education over the total lifecycle of the individual in a periodic way. The next section deals with community education.

### ***2.5.2.3 Community Education***

Learning takes place everywhere. Community education is education for the community within the community. views community education as “a process designed to enrich the lives of individuals and groups by engaging with people living within a geographical area, or sharing a common interest, to develop voluntarily a range of learning, action and reflection opportunities, determined by their personal, social, economic and political needs” (Cevero, 1997, p. 95). Moreover, Jeffs and Smith claim that “it works with different groups such as informal education, community development and community participation, adult education and youth work” (1996, p. 69). Furthermore, the SACWG Handbook claims that, “each Parish should try to discover what the needs of the community are and find ways to help the community to meet those needs. Youth and adults engage themselves in community-driven learning opportunities (2014, p. 21). Thus, it can be concluded that this education empowers community development through community participation. People learn how to intervene in

societal matters and act accordingly. The next section presents the concept of the learning society.

#### ***2.5.2.4 Learning society***

Community members are eager to embark on a learning journey. According to Hall a learning society is “a society devoted to active citizenship and equal occasions. It affords learning opportunities to coach adults to encounter the challenges of change and citizenship, adults involve themselves in contributing the shared knowledge for their benefit in a continuous and procedural perspective individually or collectively” (2004, p. 66). Orr mentions that, “learning is fundamental to the progress of humanity – for economic prosperity, social well-being, and personal fulfilment and to help ensure a sustainable planet. All societies – those with aging populations and those with youth bubbles will require more people to be economically active throughout their lives. Learning is incorporated into the fabric of everyday living” (1992, p. 90). Reference to Shield (2003), reveals that the learning society emphasizes on understanding education as a forceful, lifelong and collaborative process. Furthermore, Bowers claims that a learning community “is any group of people who share a common purpose and who are engaged in learning from each other (2004, p. 63). It is clear therefore that this learning is societal as it involves individuals and the communities they live in. Thus, it is a collective learning. The next section presents other studies related to my own.

## **2.6 Related Studies**

As indicated in the rationale section in the first chapter, few studies have been conducted focusing particularly on learning. Studies reviewed looked internationally, from within the African context, and thirdly from within South Africa. The presentation of this section follows the same order.

Gaskin (2017) presented a study titled, ‘Accompanied learning in religious education’, in America. He conducted a case study with a focus on theology and theologizing. His sample was a group of men. His findings were that he viewed accompanied learning as intentional and formative and his conclusions were that this religious education enhances Christian formation for those who attend it. Of interest for me from the study from Gaskin (2017) is that his study, like mine, also highlights Christian formation. Similar studies have been conducted elsewhere. However, they focussed more on theology and theologizing. I noticed that there was a gap in exploring how women engage in the wider community as Christians. I was keen to explore the

SACWG learning within the church context, as I was curious to find out about the correlation between SACWG learning and the world members lives in as well as the effectiveness of their learning. I was interested in exploring the types of learning that take place in this particular Women's Group and the impacts thereof on the women's lives.

Lyndelle *et al.* (2012) conducted their study in Scotland. Their study focussed on the exploration of religious information literacy in terms of how people use information to learn in the context of church communities. Their sample were men and women congregants from The World of Life Ministries (not real name). The principles that governed their study were highlighted as: managing the church; serving church communities and reaching out beyond church communities. The purpose of their study was to explore how people use information to learn in the context of church communities. Their findings identified five ways of experiencing religious information literacy, namely: growing faith; developing relationships; managing the church; serving church communities and reaching out beyond church communities. Firstly, their study highlighted principles. Secondly, it was conducted in the church context. What is significant to me about the Lyndelle *et al.* (2012) study, is the identification of principles and the church context.

Similarly, Parrish *et al.* (2007) conducted a study in Northern Africa. They were interested in exploring the Adult education of women in the Catholic Church. Their findings revealed that narrators were grounded in a variety of learning environments including family, Catholic Church and school contexts. This resulted in a new framework, or way of seeing things, by women in the church. They were interested in the Adult education of women in the Catholic Church, as was I. My study was concerned with the exploration of the learning of SACWG members in the church context. What excites me, is that both their study and my study merged since they both targeted women's learning in the church context.

The first related study from within the South African context is that of Spooner (2012). The study was conducted in Gauteng in 2012. The purpose of the study was to explore the learning of a Home Bible study group in the Methodist Church (Spooner, 2012). The purpose of Spooner's study was to explore and generate knowledge about adult learning within the non-formal learning context of a home group bible study. The participants/sample were five congregants. The data collection methods used were semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. Case study methodology was selected for the study. The findings indicated that the study participants were positively affected and that learning equipped them

to understand the need for support and care by others, within and outside of the group. What interested me was that her study was seeking to generate knowledge about adult learning within the non-formal learning context. The SACWG study is somehow related to this, since both showed a curiosity to understand spaces of learning for adult church members.

Another study by Phiri *et al.* (2002) was also a South African study, conducted in Durban. Findings revealed that women met on a Thursday to preach and pray without a male priest present. Their stories and their theological agendas became the steppingstones to a collaborative partnership between the church and the community. One of their participants, Lillian Ngcobo states:

*We African women, theologians, have failed in our task unless our theologising makes a difference to the lives of the majority of women struggling each day to survive.*

Their conclusions were that when women unite for praying, they are aware that prayer cannot buy food for someone who is starving, but it soothes them emotionally and spiritually. They perceived that almsgiving was only the solution of eradicating physical problems including hunger. What is significant about the study is that it also focussed on the Thursday gatherings and the mutual praying of the *Umanyano* (Mothers' Union). *Umanyano* turns a blind eye to serving the community out there physically. However, they serve the community spiritually and emotionally. This is similar to SACWG members whose teachings point out that they have to serve the community.

The above findings were crucial in ascertaining that there is a gap which I hope my study will fulfil. A study by Phiri *et al.* (2002) shows that the *Umanyano* (Mothers' Union) had recognised that prayer is not enough to feed the needy, and that they needed to do something more than that to ease the burden of the needy. On the other hand, the SACWG is trying to bring together the principles and aims of SACWG as learned within the group with the realities of women in the world in which they live. The SACWG members need to embark on practising what they have learned to real situations in order to safeguard their identity.

Spooner's study (2012) was interested in the affective dimension of learning, whereas my study is interested in looking at the different types of learning of the Women's Group. Her study was only pertinent to the Methodist Church's home bible study group. Both our studies are embedded in different churches, that is, the Methodist Church and the Catholic Church. Other researchers have investigated the theology and theologizing, hence the usefulness of this

current study was visualized. My study aims to extend these findings by speculating on different types of SACWG learning, in relation to its impacts on SACWG members' lives and the perceptions of the members pertaining to their learning experiences. The next section discusses Communities of Practice (CoP) as the theory which governs this study.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework is fundamental since it leads the researcher to the right direction of the study. Trifiletti *et al.* (2005) believe that the theoretical framework dictates the data collection plan. It is clear therefore that it gives directions. As Lysaght (2011) has indicated, the theoretical framework affords a foundation base for the literature review and the methods, including analysis. According to Lysaght, "concepts are useful when writing the literature review in the organized manner that is aligned with the theoretical framework" (2011, p. 53). It is the view of Lysaght (2011) that the theoretical framework and its associated concepts is needed to structure the methodology and analysis of a dissertation. The indications are therefore that the theorising of concepts is pivotal in the study as they form the basis of the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework works together with its related concepts. The work of Lovitts (2005) reveals that the theoretical framework gives a basic idea of what concepts and principles must be used in a dissertation. Furthermore, Lovitts claims that the "theoretical framework is embedded on the problem, purpose, significance and research questions" (2005, p. 58). The indications are therefore that the theoretical framework monitors the selection of research design and data analysis. It gives a bigger picture of what needs to be measured and examined in the study. It can be developed and be used to support the data, interpret the findings and underlie the recommendations (Lovitts, 2005). To quote Munhall and Chenail, "qualitative research methods have theoretical underpinnings that guide the study. Themes can be discovered in interview data that establish an emerging framework for understanding the phenomenon" (2008, p. 68) It is clear therefore that theoretical frameworks are significant in any study.

This study is underpinned by a Community of Practice theoretical background. The first part of this chapter discusses Community of Practice (CoP) which is perceived as fundamental to this study because it elucidates how learning takes place in any group of people whose goal is to learn and eventually become experts in the group. CoP is relevant to this study since it matches the purpose of the study as well as the research methodology.

Communities of Practice as a concept, was first proposed by a cognitive anthropologist, Jean Lave and Education Theorist Wenger (1998). These scholars contributed literature to concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) by stating that “the CoP is a group of people who share a craft or a profession. Any CoP can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area. It can be created deliberately with the goal of gaining knowledge related to a specific field. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that members learn from each other and have an opportunity to develop personally and professionally” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95). On this basis, it may be inferred that knowledge is shared among the group to enhance learning from each other.

In addition, Shield mentions that “this type of learning has existed for as long as people have been learning and sharing their experiences through storytelling. CoP is the process of knowledge generation, application and reproduction. CoPs are groups in which a constant process of legitimate peripheral participation takes place where learners enter a community and gradually take up its practices” (2003, p. 111). Kilner (2004) mentions that members can learn at the periphery and finally can take up more and more of the dominant practices of the group. In addition, Lave and Wenger state that “the reproduction of knowledge through the process of joining and identifying with communities as the central and defining phenomenon within a CoP has been around as long as people have gathered to share stories and demonstrate to each other how they organize things” (1998, p. 123). Lave and Wenger (1991) report that the term CoP is used to discuss the notion of legitimate peripheral participation. This study is framed by the Communities of Practice theory (CoP). The next section defines CoP.

### ***2.7.1 Definition of Communities of Practice***

Lave and Wenger claim that “CoPs are seen as ways of promoting innovation, developing social capital, facilitating and disseminating knowledge within a group. Learning that takes place in a CoP is embedded in three components, namely: the domain, the community and the practice” (1991, p. 63). Likewise, Wenger mentions that “learning is a social phenomenon, people organize their learning around the social communities to which they belong. The processes of learning and membership are interwoven. Knowledge is inseparable from the practice” (1998, p. 57).

Wenger mentions that, “members have a purpose and are more focussed on improving performance and enhancing knowledge of the group” (2007a, p. 58). Wenger defines CoP as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do

it better as they interact regularly” (2006, p. 110). Wenger claims that “CoP’s are voluntary as their ability to generate enough excitement, to attract and engage members, makes them successful most of the time” (2002, p. 56). Wenger (1998) has drawn attention to the fact that CoP has three characteristics, namely: domain – the area of shared interest; practice – a shared body of knowledge, experiences and techniques; and community – a self-selected group of individuals who care enough about the topic to partake in regular interactions. Furthermore, Wenger (1998), clarifies that domain is more about what we care about; community is about who cares about it and practice is about what we do together about it. It is clear therefore that members’ interaction is vital in a CoP, as these questions boost the level of communication and enhance critical thinking as well as participation.

Wenger define a CoP as “what is shared by a community of practice and emphasize that what makes a community, is its practice” (1998, p. 90). This practice is embedded in social context and gives structure and meaning. Practice involves a lot of learning. Practice takes place within its members through negotiations of meaning. It is clear therefore that the knowledge which members gain is through the process of sharing information and experiences, thus promoting learning.

In addition, to the definitions discussed above, Nickols mentions that CoP has characteristics namely: “joint enterprise where members are to accomplish something on an ongoing basis, having common work to perform; mutual engagement where members interact with one another for clarification of work they need to perform, they build their identities at work; shared repertoire where members have work in common including methods, tools, techniques, language, stories and behaviour patterns” (2012, p. 88). Their work is rooted in cultural context. Thus, it can be concluded that these characteristics are crucial in giving group members a strong sense of identity.

Furthermore, Preece claims that “CoPs meet regularly, not necessarily face to face, however, through networks” (2012, p. 70). Thus, it can be concluded that the CoP encourages practitioners to take collective responsibility for their learning. As previously mentioned, these meetings are utilized to clarify their work by defining how it is done and to change how it is done. This is classified as mutual engagement.

Nickola (2012) mentions that learning can take place through conversations and social media. CoPs have a purpose and goal. CoPs focus on improving performance and enhancing knowledge of the group by sharing it. It must therefore be recognised that even though there

is a distinction between concepts, the learning in the women’s group uses both concepts. The women’s group relies on doing things together as far as their learning is concerned. The next section discusses learning in a CoP.

### 2.7.2 *Learning in Communities of Practice*

Wenger claims that “learning is fundamentally a social phenomenon. People organize their learning around the social communities to which they belong. Knowledge is integrated in the life of communities that share values, beliefs, languages and ways of doing things. Real knowledge is integrated in the doing, social relations and expertise of these communities. As we change our learning, our identity and our relationship to the group also changes. Knowledge is inseparable from practice. It is not possible to know without doing. By doing, we learn. Circumstances in which we engage in real action that has consequences for both us and our community, create the most powerful learning environments” (1998, p. 112). It must therefore be recognised that empowerment or the ability to contribute to a community creates potential for learning. Learning is dissimilar to stages of membership within the group. Novices learn according to their level, same as do those who have been members for a long time.

Wenger’s theory of Communities of Practice provides useful descriptions of learning. The theory of CoP assumes that “it is as much a part of people’ human nature, it is both life-sustaining and unavoidable. Learning is fundamentally a social phenomenon” (1998, p. 114). Group members need to consider what they are capable of knowing; the kind of understanding they demonstrate; the manner their learning takes place and the type of support they need. These points are significant to safeguard learning in the community. The next figure displays the components of learning in a CoP.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Learning</b>	<b>Illustration</b>
Community		Learning as Belonging
Identity		Learning as Becoming
Meaning		Learning as Experience
Practice		Learning as Doing

**Figure 2: Components of a Social Theory of Learning (Wenger, 1998)**

The above figure illustrates the characteristics of creating a CoP. Wenger (1991) in (Hodkinson), claim that “identity entails how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (2004, p. 13). On this basis it may

be inferred that learning in a CoP is capable in transforming people's lives and behaviours as well as their thinking capabilities.

According to Wenger, "the four Peripheral components demonstrated in the above figure can be substituted with Learning, and place it in the centre as the principal focus" (1988, p. 113). Communities of Practice are the central part of our daily lives, like learning. People learn through participating in matters pertaining to their communities and organizations. Thus, it can be concluded that these components emphasize learning which entails movement to different stages within the CoP.

According to Nickols, "learning is a process that is positioned in a true context which provides learners with the opportunity to engage with specific ideas and concepts on a need-to-know basis; it entails learners' motivation and intellectual commitment to be continuous. Participating in a certain group or team is both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Their mutual engagement gives them identity. They do what they do to give meaning to what they learn" (2012, p. 120). These are vital in portraying social participation as a process of learning and of knowing. The evidence seems to be strong that SACWG members feel a need to do things together in order to learn and apply active participation in all contexts.

Furthermore, Wenger explain that "learning changes people's capabilities" (1998, p. 116). The components shown in Figure 2 above, include the following: changing ability individually and collectively, to experience life and the world as meaningful; shared historical and social resources and practice: frameworks, and perspectives that can endure mutual engagement in action; the social configurations in the community: enterprises are worth pursuing and participation is recognizable as competence; how learning changes who we are and creates identity: personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities (Wenger, 1998). On this basis it may be inferred that learning in a CoP relies on participation and members' commitment to learn.

Wenger believes that "through peripheral activities, novices become accustomed to the tasks, vocabulary and organizing principles of the community. Newcomers become old timers gradually, their participant takes forms that are more and more central to the functioning of the community. Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) suggests that membership in a CoP is interceded by the possible forms of participation to which newcomers have access, both physically and socially. Newcomers can directly observe the practices of the experts, they can understand the bigger context into which their own determinations fit" (1998, p. 118). On

this basis it may be inferred that participation in learning commences from the initial stage, that is, “newcomers” until members reach final stage, that is, full members. Learning continues even after the final stage for as long as members still belong to the community.

### ***2.7.3 Relevance of CoP to this study***

Communities of Practice as a theory will govern this study. According to Wenger, “its relevance is determined by the impacts it has on the education sphere, namely: it suggests facilitators understand their learners’ Communities of Practice and acknowledge the learning learners do in such communities; it also suggests facilitators structure learning opportunities that embed knowledge in church practices, group practices and social relations and facilitators should create opportunities for adult learners to solve real problems in real learning situations” (1998, p. 122). Thus, it can be concluded that these impacts are relevant to the study. Facilitators do not plan learning alone, they involve learners and the learning becomes learner-centred. Members create knowledge of the group’s culture, and its doctrines and match these with the church’s practices, group practices and the community at large”. In my opinion, this strategy creates a smooth flow of information. Learners acquire problem-solving skills. Learners are confident and competent.

The theory seeks to understand both the structure of communities and how learning occurs in them. Wenger observes that, “this approach views learning as an act of membership in a Community of Practice” (1998, p. 127). SACWG has three stages of membership which form the structure of the group, that is, aspirants; probationers and full members. Learning takes place within these stages of membership where participation and learning are merged. Likewise, Hlela (2017, p. 12), perceives learning as “the movement from the periphery to the centre, where the older and wiser become teachers who dictate how learning takes place in these stages of membership.” Given this evidence, it can be seen that both teaching and learning take place within the group. The knowledgeable members disseminate information to the novices.

This theory is appropriate for my study as it involves the process of sharing information and experiences within the group. As Lave and Wenger write, “members acquire learning from each other and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally” (1991, p. 100). They learn through their experiences as well as from each other.

Lave and Wenger write “learning is central to human identity. A primary focus is learning as social participation where an individual is regarded as an active participant in the practices of

the group as well as in the construction of her identity. People continuously create motivation to become a more central participant in the group” (1991, p. 108). Therefore, any individual willing to join the women’s group will work towards becoming a member. Also, Rule states that, “meaning making in participation is processed and facilitated in different spaces of learning, individually or collectively through conscious or unconscious processes, refers to as ‘dialogic learning space, interpersonal space and intrapersonal space. Interpersonal learning space is created as people engage with each other; and intrapersonal is the ability to engage with oneself in a dialogue” (2014, p. 15). The next section highlights the critiques of the CoP theory.

#### ***2.7.4 Critique of Communities of Practice***

This section demonstrates critiques of CoP because no learning theory is immune to criticism. According to Wenger (1998), the first critique is in relation to power relations, followed by the assumed notion that members are willing and open to knowledge sharing and finally the common one – the use of the term differently.

Cevero and Wilson argue that “the learning theories neglect how adult educators exercise power through negotiation and programme design” (1997, p. 49). Cevero and Wilson (1997) designed a programme without consulting the learners or considering the needs of learners. Cevero and Wilson point out that “Wenger neglects the issue of internal power dynamics among the members of a CoP when designing contexts for learning” (1997, p. 55). It is clear therefore that unequal distribution of power within a group can prohibit participants’ experiences and learning.

Wenger (2002) did not mention how educators exercise power and influence over the planning process. Boylan analyses the CoP theory as “it views learning as occurring through participation in social practice within communities of practice and a learning community can be in the form of an ecology of practice that places learning at the centre of its practices. Should learning be the enterprise of the community, the social practices of the community can be established through consensual negotiations” (2004, p. 88).

Fox claims that “a CoP programme is the key to the successful implementation of Communities of Practice. The practical, theoretical and reflective experiences of learners should be investigated and connected accordingly” (2000, p. 79). Sometimes the learners are reserved and not prone to knowledge sharing capacity.

Cox argues that Wenger and others use the term CoP differently, sometimes as “a way of examining the situated social construction of meaning and sometimes to refer to a fundamental community or informal group subsidized by an organization to facilitate knowledge sharing or learning” (2005, p. 76). Furthermore, Hall and Graham argue that “new knowledge generation is rare in open access communities, but more common in smaller and more closed groups” (2004, p. 66). This implies that small groups are ideal for CoPs.

In conclusion, critiques have been presented above that the CoP theory ignores unequal power relations within groups, assumes conception that members are enthusiastic and open to knowledge sharing, and finally used to mean different things by different people.

## **2.8 Summary**

In this chapter, key concepts that were found in, a review of the literature, Learning was defined in terms of learning according to Behaviourist theory, Constructivist theory, learning as Transformative, Afrocentric learning, and Social learning. Learning spaces were discussed, namely: formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy) was discussed followed by discussions of Adult Education, Adult Education from an African Perspective, Lifelong Education, Continuing Education, Recurrent Education, Community Education, and the Learning society. Related studies were discussed. This was followed by the identification of the theoretical framework, Communities of Practice Theory, with a definition of CoP, and a description of learning in CoP. Finally, a brief critique of CoP was given.

The next chapter discusses Research design and methodology. It must therefore be recognised that learning in a CoP takes place in the form of Situated Learning where learning is embedded in the group’s activities, including its cultural and historical context. Learning is also in the form of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) where learning is diverged according to membership stages. Furthermore, learning was described in Figure 1 as the primary focus of a CoP and supported by four components of learning, namely: community, identity, meaning and practice.

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

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented key concepts, the literature review on related studies and the theoretical framework for the study. This chapter explains how the research questions are answered. The purpose of the chapter is to present both the methodology and the research design of the study.

This chapter discusses the research design. Justification for utilizing these methods is also provided. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the stages of research which include the selection of participants, data collection process as well as the process of data analysis. It finally discusses issues of trustworthiness in interpretivist research.

The study explores the nature of learning in the SACWG group and its impact on the members' lives and the world they live in. The St Kuhle Parish (SKP) is situated near an informal settlement which is vulnerable to social ills like unemployment, poverty, substance abuse and crime. Such learning was scrutinized through lenses of Communities of Practice theory.

The research objectives of this study are as follows:-

- To bring together the principles of SACWG as learnt within the group and the real world members live in.
- To apply what is learnt in the SACWG to the world members live in.

The research design is discussed in the next section.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design focuses on the logic of research. Trochim (2006), emphasises on the logic of research, all necessary elements are embraced in a research project. He further claims that good research design are expected to indicate the context of the investigation. Research design indicates how the main parts of a research project integrate in addressing the central research questions. In addition, Niewenhuis (2007), suggests that a research design is the plan used to link the conceptual research problems to the pertinent empirical research. It indicates what data is required, what instruments need to be utilized for data collection and data analysis and how all of this is going to answer the research questions. On this basis it may be inferred that

the entire research depends strongly on its research design, thus it is vital to design it accurately. Research design is also crucial for the quality and efficiency of procedures to ascertain validity and credibility. It is clear therefore that it paves a way for the identification and development of research procedures, in order to conduct the study. Thus, it can be concluded that the research design must be embedded in the research problem and researchers need to adhere to it in order to draw strong and convincing conclusions.

The research questions that informed the study are the following:

- What is the nature and process of learning that takes place in the Catholic Women's Group – St Anne's Sodality?
- How does learning impact the lives of the women in the group?
- What are the perceptions of women regarding their learning experiences?

The next section discusses the research approach used for this study.

### ***3.2.1 Research Approach***

The study followed a qualitative approach. This was chosen since it would provide insights into the everyday lives of SACWG members since the researcher was inquisitive to understand the impacts of learning on the lives of women in the group; the nature and process of learning; and the perceptions of the group members regarding their learning experiences. Werquin believes that "qualitative research uses inductive methods to understand, interpret, explain and develop a theory on a phenomenon or setting and also individual methodology to define life experiences and give them meaning. A qualitative research approach seeks to realize social phenomena from the viewpoints of the participants" (2007, p. 65). Meriam (2009) makes it clear that participants are given opportunity to interpret questions and respond accordingly. The indications are therefore that this approach is mainly subjective. A qualitative research approach allows the interviewer to probe for more details. The next section highlights the research paradigm.

Justification for using qualitative research approach is that it is crucial for this research project since its purpose was to explore the relationship between what was learnt within the women's group and how what was learnt impacted on SACWG members' daily lives. Qualitative research is designed to focus on understanding a given social context. The research paradigm is discussed in the next section.

### **3.2.2 Research Paradigm**

The study was framed by the interpretivist paradigm. Bertram and Christiansen (2014), point out that this paradigm “seeks to improve a greater understanding of how people interpret the contexts in which they live and how they make sense of their worlds, such as attitudes, perceptions, behaviour and motivation. Its goal is to understand why and how people do things. This type of research cannot be generalized. It is clear therefore that the researcher is seeking to find out how the women in the group make sense of their learning and how they make meaning of their actions.

The interpretivist paradigm is an approach to social science research. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) reveal that interpretivists work well with qualitative case studies. The next section defines the research style.

### **3.2.3 The Research Style**

The study was in the form of a case study which “is a systematic and in-depth study of one particular case in its context” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 14). The study seeks to gain more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Merriam claims that “a case study design is provided along with general recommendations for writing the research questions, emerging propositions, determining the ‘case’ under study, binding the case and a discussion of data sources and triangulation” (2009, p. 25). Merriam based the approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm since “constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective” (2009, p. 45). This paradigm recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning. Thus, it can be concluded that in order to attain a deep understanding of a case in a study, multiple types of data sources have to be utilized. Case studies are often used by researchers in the interpretivist paradigm. Research design is dealt with in the next section.

A case study method is useful in social science related studies which are aiming at understanding human beings in a social context. According to Merriam “a researcher using a case study design can apply a variety of methodologies and rely on a variety of sources to investigate a research problem” (2009, p. 49). Furthermore, she points out that the case study has a research intent and methodological purpose which affects methods that are chosen to gather data. Thus, it can be concluded that the major purpose of choosing a case study strategy is to explore the accuracy of a single case, in this case, SACWG learning.

The case study strategy was chosen for this study because of its flexibility. The researcher was focussing on one phenomenon and was able to employ different methods for data collection. It concentrates on one or few phenomena and it permits the researcher to utilize a variety of research methods for investigation (Merriam, 2009). In addition, Merriam and Kim claim that “the case study allows for empirical inquiry of phenomenon within its real life context” (2008, p. 88). It is clear therefore that data can be obtained from different data collection methods such as interviews and or observation. The population of the study is discussed in the next section.

### ***3.2.3.1 Population of study***

All the SACWG members of St Kuhle Parish (not real name) were regarded as the population of this study. According to Habermas, the “population is the larger group of people who experience the general problem, it refers to the entire group of people and events of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate; it is a broad group of people to whom the results will apply” (1987, p. 33). It must therefore be recognised that the St Anne’s group had twenty-three affiliated members, including five members that were reported sick and could thus no longer attend the group’s activities. However, their membership still existed since they were still contributing in terms of monthly/annual subscriptions. The table below shows the entire population of SACWG members at St Kuhle Parish.

**Table 3: SACWG members at St Kuhle Parish**

All SACWG Members					
Thembi	Sara	Zuzile	Mpumi	Betty	Thandi
Ningi	Zimbili	Futhi	Jojo	Zama	Lihle
Dorah	Ritta	Zanele	Zethu	Zekhethelo	Fikile
Senamile	Gcinile	Taura	Gugu	Dudu	

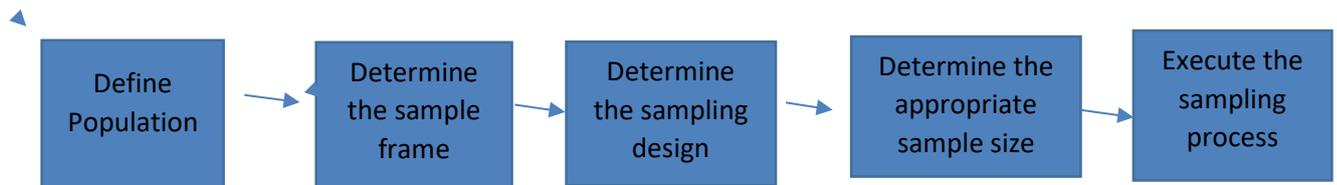
  

Active Members				Sick Members	
Thembi	Sara	Mpumi	Betty	Gcinile	Senamile
Thandi	Ningi	Zimbili	Futhi	Gugu	Dudu
Jojo	Zama	Lihle	Dorah	Fikile	
Ritta	Zanele	Zethu	Zekhethelo		
Zuzile	Laura				

The above table contains the entire SACWG members of St Kuhle Parish (SKP). It is clear therefore that the results of the study will apply to the entire group. The next section defines the sampling of the study.

### ***3.2.3.2 Sampling***

Out of the twenty-three SACWG members, seven were selected to represent the population as the sample. Niewenhuis, views sampling as “the process used to choose a portion of the population for the study” (2007, p. 123). Steps in sampling are highlighted below:-



**Figure 3: Steps in sampling according to Sekaran and Bougie (2011)**

The figure above illustrates the vital steps in sampling. Thus, it can be concluded that the researcher needs to adhere to a certain process when selecting the sample. These steps were carefully considered by the researcher when choosing the sample.

There are different stages of SACWG group membership, namely: aspirants, probationers and full members. The sample therefore consisted of members selected from these different stages. Niewenhuis (2007), claims that there is a purposive sampling which is stratified. In support of Niewenhuis’s opinion, Bertram and Christiansen (2014), state that the sample makes it clear that the researcher will be able to represent not only the overall population, but also key subgroups of the population. Creswell, comment that a sample “is a group of participants selected to partake in a study” (2003, p. 95). Furthermore, Patton describes stratified purposeful sampling as “the samples within samples .... purposeful samples can be stratified ... by selecting particular units or cases that differ according to a key dimension” (2001, p. 15). The indications are therefore that among the seven SACWG members selected as the sample, their membership phases were also considered. Their experiences were determined by the membership stage they were representing. The researcher chose this approach because she was seeking knowledge about the members’ experiences based on their stages of membership.

Thus, the sample was comprised of two aspirants (requesters), two probationers (new members), three full members (old timers) including the Chairperson and Deputy Chair of SACWG. The Deputy President (DP) was the facilitator. The case study participants are identified below.

**Table 4: The sample**

<b>Aspirants</b>	<b>Probationers</b>	<b>Full Members</b>
Betty Futhi	Lihle Thandi	Zuzile Laura (the facilitator) Zanele (the Chair)

The above table illustrates the sample according to their categories.

The sample was selected after considering whether the participants would be capable of giving rich information needed to answer the research questions. The selected participants were able to describe their experiences of the phenomenon and were knowledgeable about the St Anne's women's group's culture. The researcher utilized triangulation by choosing observation, focus group and individual interviews as the methods for data collection. Participants are defined in the next section. It must be noted that the names of the participants used below are not their real names. The next section discusses the setting.

### ***3.2.4 The research context***

The study was conducted at St Kuhle Parish. Prior to that, I had to write a letter to the Parish Priest, requesting permission to conduct such a study in his parish, using his people. I had to explain the rationale of the study which was highlighted previously in Chapter One. Permission was successfully granted. I then wrote a letter to the Chair of SACWG, asking permission to conduct a study using her members. Permission was also granted. There are rooms which are used for Sunday School learners at the back of the church. I had to book one of those rooms for interviews. I booked the venue through the Parish Secretary. I decided to conduct all interviews on Sunday since it was convenient for all the participants to participate as they always come to church for church services.

As the researcher, I worked together with the Chairperson of SACWG in selecting participants, based on their level of experience in the SACWG. Observation was done prior to the individual and focus group interviews. Face-to-face individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted and recorded. Attendance registers served as the sampling frame since the names of the accessed sample were chosen from the register.

Interview room was quiet, spacious and cool. The venue was convenient, private and conducive for the interviews. Data collection methods are discussed in the next section.

### ***3.2.5 Data Generation Methods***

Qualitative research methods are documented to have an in-depth and broad understanding of the concerns by means of their verbatim interpretation, such as interviewing and observation (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, Hill (2002) believes that qualitative interviews are a powerful tool for gathering information about humans' experiences, views and beliefs. I started with observation followed by a focus group and ended with semi-structured interviews. I preferred

to begin with observation in order to get first-hand data. I was on site, observing things pertaining to the study without being told anything by anyone. I then proceeded with focus group interviews, where I was able to get more information. Finally, I interviewed participants individually. I was able to probe where there was insufficient information received. The next section discusses these three types of data collection techniques which are utilized in this study.

### ***3.2.5.1 Observations***

Observations took place in the church where SACWG members gather for their learning. This was conducted twice during the focus group and individual interviews. These helped me to link what the participants were saying and how they were feeling during the interviews. The duration of observations was thirty minutes each. Cohen *et al.* (2008) found that observation was relevant to study a phenomenon in its natural setting in order to make improvements to what has been done if necessary. This observation was focusing on assessing the quality of teaching and learning, the connections between what participants were saying, what their feelings were and how they could develop further. Structured observation (see Appendix 1) was an ideal tool for data collection for this study, where I would observe the class according to the schedule. Structured observation work according to a plan and involve specific information of units that were observed.

I, as a researcher, played a role of a participant observer as I was an active member of the group being observed. As Creswell has indicated that, “participant observation involves the observer being a member of the setting in which they are collecting data” (2007, p. 94). I joined the group in order to get a deeper insight of their learning. My presence as a researcher did not hinder the process, participants were my group- mates. I came into the class for observation with some reservations that sometimes I was biased during the process. I tried to respect the culture of the group being studied and their uniqueness.

Participant observation is relevant to study a phenomenon in its natural setting. According to Bertram and Christiansen, “observation enables the researcher to gather information about a wide range of phenomena including the physical setting of the church, the state of the building and other things” (2014, p. 66). Thus, it can be concluded that these elements must be listed in the observation schedule as they are crucial to be observed.

The duration of observation was about 30 minutes where I, as the researcher, was able to do a holistic view of the activity being observed. Observation was done twice. The observation schedule was designed in such a way that it urged me, as the researcher, to listen to the women’s

group conversations during group discussions, make notes on what they understood, what they were having difficulty with and how they processed the information.

Sometimes observation can be bad or good. The advantages of observation according to Bertram and Christiansen are that “observation is the main method for attaining insight into status quo; and the researcher need not rely on the opinions of others that are derived from interviews; she can see what is actually taking place in a classroom. On this basis it may be inferred that I was able to gain first-hand information through observation” (2014, p. 70). The main disadvantages of observation are “that it is impossible for any person to observe everything that happens in any situation and the interpretation of classroom relations depends on how the researcher understands the domain and what she anticipates” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 71). It is clear therefore that the observer must be specific about what she has planned to observe and has deemed necessary for the study. The interview assistant assisted the researcher in taking notes and she was trained for that. Focus group interviews are discussed in the next section.

### ***3.2.5.2 Focus Group Interviews***

Focus group interviews (see Appendix 4) were conducted in the church as well. The participants were aspirants, probationers and full members of the women’s group. Everyone in the group was given a chance to answer questions. This is also recommended by Werquin (2007) when he states that the good focus group can be comprised of a minimum of four or a maximum of eight participants. It is clear therefore that everybody’s opinion is vital and unique. The session was audio-recorded.

Focus groups interviews were chosen because these are a good way to gather in-depth information. The focus group comprised of seven members of the women’s group. The duration of the focus group interview was about one hour long. Interview schedules are a part of the appendices. According to Holloway and Wheeler, “researchers in focus group, interview participants with common characteristics or experience for the purpose of stimulating ideas, opinions and insights about specific topics or certain issues related to an area of interest. Informants can build on the answers of others” (2002, p. 117). A group of seven SACWG members were interviewed.

Participants influenced each other through their answers. More information was accomplished within a short time. People in a focus group may be interviewed on an individual basis as well as part of the group. These interviews inspire open and honest discussion. The goal of focus

group is to have the participants understand the topic of interest to the researcher, which will stimulate interaction among the group members (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Focus groups were useful for data collection since the topic or the population has not been studied in the past. Individual interviews are discussed in the next section.

### ***3.2.5.3 Individual Interviews***

Face-to-face interviews were also conducted in the church after Mass. They are perceived as advantageous and flexible techniques to be used in retrieving the participants' central perceptions, attitudes, and feelings regarding complex phenomena (Kvale, 2007). Each interview persisted for about 30 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded with the permission to do so granted by the participants. To quote from Bertram and Christiansen, "an interview is a conversation between the researcher and the respondent, it is different from an everyday conversation, and the researcher sets the agenda and asks the questions" (2014, p. 76). The common type of interview utilized in this study was the semi-structured interview since it allows the researcher to be flexible with open-ended questions and offers the chance to explore matters that arise unexpectedly (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). The evidence seems to indicate that the interviewer controls the interview and the interviewee responds according to the question asked.

Interviews can be fruitful or fruitless. Bertram and Christiansen, observe that the advantages of conducting interviews are that "the researcher is present during the interview with the respondent, and the questions are made clear as opposed to the questionnaire; more questions can be asked by the researcher to obtain more detailed information from the respondent who initially gave insufficient information; much more detailed and descriptive data can be collected through interview. Interviews generate large amounts of textual data which make it difficult when it comes to transcribing" (2014, p. 79).

I used the semi-structured individual interviews in order to gain more information (see Appendix 5). Seven members were interviewed – two aspirants, two probationers and three old timers which included the facilitator and the Chairperson of SACWG. Interview schedules were utilized to collect data. This type of interview is flexible and prompts the interviewer to probe in order to acquire much information. The interview schedule was utilized in order to accomplish the desired goal. Open-ended questions were used.

Good interaction between the researcher and the participants was maintained. Turning to Werquin (2007), one finds out that the interviewer has to formulate questions as a result of the

interactive nature of communication. Probing questions were used in order to encourage participants to keep talking about the subject of interest to the researcher. Kvale (2007) illustrates that by using interviews one can easily get the story and in-depth information behind a participant's experiences. The evidence seems to be strong that more information can be attained from the interviews. Interviews were audio-taped since permission was granted by participants. Transcription was done soon after the interviews. The duration for the entire exercise was two hours and thirty minutes long.

Participants were assured that their identification would be kept anonymous for the entire study. This was crucial in increasing the response rate. Sekaran and Bougie, provide evidence that the response rate is enhanced "where the anonymity is assured and the summary of findings should be offered as incentive to participate in the study" (2011, p. 80). Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, participants were given consent forms to sign before the study began. Participants were made aware that confidentiality would be maintained and their names would not be made public.

In conclusion, data generation that was utilised included the following techniques: observation, focus group and individual interviews. Permission to use audiotape was sought before the interview. All the participants consented to this. The next section discusses the data analysis.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Cohen *et al.* (2007) have expressed a similar view that analysis of data begins early in the qualitative research. Thick descriptions are enabled, themes are recognized and the case is theorized. Analysis is crucial in handling and monitoring as well as organizing and storing the data in a systematic organisation of the data (Rule & John (2011). The indications are therefore that data analysis should be started soon after the interviews, themes derived from the data and the data monitored and stored systematically.

Data collected from both individual interviews and focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Responses were in isiZulu. I, as the researcher, translated responses into English during the transcription phase and the participants' identities were removed from the transcripts to sustain confidentiality. Coding system was utilized. Responses were analysed and categorised according to the themes. Transcripts were checked for accuracy. The data collected fits well with the research philosophy, research design and research questions in such a way that I was able to categorise it according to themes. I utilized

both inductive and deductive methods during data analysis. Ethical issues are discussed in the next section.

### **3.4 Ethical Issues**

Letters of permission to conduct the study were obtained from the Parish Priest and Chairperson of the SACWG. Participants gave informed consent in order to be included in the study. Participants were aware that the participation in the study was voluntary (see Appendix 1). Informed consent forms were written in both native and foreign languages. Participants were notified about the nature and purpose of the study. They were told about their rights to withdraw from the study should they feel a need to do so. Assurance was given to the participants that they would remain anonymous throughout the study. This guaranteed privacy. According to Fouka and Mantzorou, “ethics pursue to incorporate the rights of autonomous individuals through self-determination” (2011, p. 55). Participants were granted access to the draft report in order to clarify points and check accuracy, according to the information they presented, thus ensuring the quality and accuracy of the data through member checking.

Reference to Fouka and Mantzorou (2011) reveals that the study caused no harm of any kind physically, emotionally or socially, as far as nonmaleficence was concerned. It must therefore be recognised that the research was conducted in an acceptable manner, causing no harm or risk to anybody. Participants were told that confidentiality would be maintained for information they supplied and that the researcher would protect their identities when publishing the results of the study. The study would be beneficial to the participants and the women’s group at large, as it would reveal other aspects which the women’s group was not aware of and they would be able to administer changes accordingly. Any ethical issues that could arise during the study would be taken care of in an appropriate manner, with the advice from my supervisor.

#### **3.4.1 Trustworthiness**

Quality of data is assured through trustworthiness and triangulation. According to Rule and John, “trustworthiness can be measured by measures of quality such as transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability” (2011, p. 67) It is clear therefore that these aspects of trustworthiness had to be maintained in order to ascertain the quality of data. According to Rule and John (2011), the following are some key trustworthiness for interpretivist paradigm in this study:

- (a) Credibility – confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings. According to Rule and John (2011), techniques to establish credibility are prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member-checking. Credibility can be achieved through using a number of data collection techniques. I employed triangulation, member checks, peer review and observation. In qualitative research, triangulation refers to use of multiple methods of data sources. I used observation, focus group interviews and individual interviews. I then utilized member checks where I checked with participants about the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations. I asked my classmate to review the study for peer review. She had a general understanding of the nature of the study. She assisted in checking for accuracy.
- I had an assistant researcher when doing observations to observe the group at the same time in order to compare and rate the findings. The data were audio recorded to enhance accuracy and to confirm credibility.
- (b) Conformability – the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the subjects and not researcher bias, motivation or interest. Techniques to establish this are audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity.
- (c) Transferability – showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts. Techniques to establish this are thick description, and theoretical sampling. Findings can be applied in other contexts (Rule & John, 2011). This enables the readers of a given research report to raise their opinions regarding applicability of its findings to different contexts. I gave my report to other people to read and give feedback on findings.
- (d) Dependability – showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Techniques to establish these are audit trail, peer examination and stepwise replication. The checking was done and the findings were consistent.
- (e) Triangulation – the use of triangulation was vital to ensure trustworthiness. I used multiple sources as methods of collecting the data in order to support findings. Triangulation is a good way of ensuring respectable and rigorous research. It is the process of using multiple methods to support findings in the study. It enhances the internal validity through bias elimination of a single source. Bertram and Christiansen

make it clear that “the same question can be asked in more than one way and the participant can be tested if she responded to the two questions in a similar way” (2014, p. 75). In addition, Robson) found that “triangulation involves the use of different methods especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews which form the major data collection strategies for qualitative research” (1997, p. 85). The evidence seems to indicate that different instrumentation were used for the same question to double check whether the responses were similar.

- (f) Member checking – participants were invited to comment on the interview transcript. Double-checking of responses was done by the researcher and the participants in order to confirm credibility. This was done on Sundays after Mass (church service). The researcher requested participants to participate in member checking to ascertain validity and credibility of data. Participants were given the opportunity to check if there were errors in the data.
- (g) Peer debriefing – I also engaged with other researchers in organized meetings to minimize research bias. I trained the assistant researcher on how to do observation and how to record the data. The training was conducted two weeks before the observation in order for the assistant to practice and familiarize herself with the procedures. The instruments used for data collection were checked for whether they measured what they ought to measure in order to confirm validity. This was done through triangulation where more than one data collection methods were utilized.

I was involved in the research throughout the process to ascertain trustworthiness. I ensured that the number of participants was maintained and that there were no dropouts throughout the study, thus improving external validity. A sample used for the study enabled valid inferences and conclusion about the quality of data. There were no power relations spotted throughout the data collection since participants were familiar with the researcher and the environment.

All interview schedules were tested before they were administered in order to check for efficiency. The usage of different instrumentation assisted me, as the researcher, in maintaining credibility. I asked the same questions in different ways to ascertain triangulation. Bertram & Christiansen (2014) claim that participants are given opportunity to double-check the interview transcripts in order to confirm whether they

are the true reflection of what they have said or not. Data interpretations were checked by peers and the supervisor for accuracy and consistency.

### **3.5 Summary**

The chapter has provided a background on the methodology that was administered in conducting this case study. I, as the researcher, utilized a qualitative approach since I was curious to understand the type of learning that takes place in the SACWG. The study was framed by the case study style. Based on the population of 18 active members, a sample size of seven members was chosen. The sample was regarded as a stratified purposive sample since it not only represented the population, but also key subgroups of the population, that is, aspirants, probationers and full members. Data collection instruments that were incorporated were individual interviews, focus group interviews and observation. Interview schedules were specifically designed in line with the research objectives. Ethics were considered during data collection. The results from these instruments were analysed by using coding and themes. Chapter Four will present the findings and discussion of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the research design and the methodology used in this study. This chapter presents the findings and discussions.

The study focussed on understanding the types of learnings that took place in the SACWG. The purpose of the study was therefore to explore the relationship between what was learnt within the group and how what was learnt impacted on SACWG members' lives. The study was underpinned by these questions: What is the nature and process of learning that takes place in SACWG? How does learning impact the women's lives? What are the perceptions of women in the group regarding their learning experiences?

A Case Study approach was fundamental for the study as it seeks for depth. I, as the researcher, was able to get closer to the participants and gained deep insights into the phenomena. As a researcher and a member of SACWG, as indicated before, multiple methods of data generation were utilized to maintain rigour, credibility and to produce rich data. The methods used were observation, a focus group and individual semi-structured interviews. The sample comprised of seven SACWG members which were chosen through stratified purposive sampling since participants were selected from the three different phases of the SACWG membership. Two aspirants (new members); two probationers (the trainees) and three full members (old timers) were selected. Participants are organised according to the significance of the themes emerged from the inductive and deductive data analysis as presented in Chapter Three. The next section presents the case study.

### **4.2 The Case Study**

#### ***4.2.1 Description of participants***

The participants in this study are SACWG members ranging between forty to somewhat above eighty years. The table below indicates the demographics of the research participants.

**Table 5: Demographic information of participants**

Age Group (years)	Participant	Marital Status	Seniority	Enrolment Date	Employment	Education	Residential Area	Home Language
40 – 50	Betty	Married	Aspirant	2017	Employed	Lower Primary	Town	Sesotho
51 – 65	Futhi	Married	Aspirant	2017	Pensioner	Primary	Sodwana T/ship	IsiZulu
	Lihle	Married	Probationer	2016	Pensioner	High School	Town	IsiZulu
	Thandi	Widower	Probationer	2016	Pensioner	High School	Sodwana T/ship	IsiZulu
	Laura	Married	Full member & a facilitator	2000	Employed	Tertiary	Shayamoya T/ship	IsiZulu
	Zanele	Married	Full member & a Chair	2004	Unemployed with Child Support Grant	Matric	KwaNodwengu Area	IsiZulu
66 & above	Zuzile	Widower	Full member	1968	Pensioner	Junior Certificate (JC)	KwaDweshula Area	IsiZulu

The above table illustrates the demographic information of the study participants utilised for data collection. This is fundamental as it gives members' categories in terms of their membership, their residential areas, marital status, home language, employment and their age groups.

Out of seven participants, two were widowers. Two participants were reported as aspirants (requesters), two were probationers (new comers) and three were full members (old timers). They were all Africans as per their ethnic group and their home language was IsiZulu except one whose home language was Sesotho. She understood IsiZulu a little bit. The medium of instruction was IsiZulu. Three participants had reached their High School Education, one had only Senior Primary Education. One had a Junior Certificate (JC), one had not finished Lower Primary Education and one had reached Tertiary Education. The age group of the participants was between forty and eighty years. The category of seniority is critical for the purpose and the CoP for the study. A brief summary of each participant is provided below. The participants' names are not their real names to maintain confidentiality.

## **Futhi**

Futhi is a married woman, with three children and two grandchildren. Her children and grandchildren attend church. She is between the age group of fifty and sixty-five years. She is not working, as she is a pensioner. Her husband is also a pensioner. She has a primary education only. She resides in the Sodwana Township which is 3 km away from the parish. The township, like many townships in KwaZulu-Natal or in the country, is facing many challenges of poverty, unemployment, drug abuse and more. Futhi, having joined SACWG in 2017, is an aspirant, a requester and observer of SACWG. She says the reason for joining the group so late in her life in the church is because she has just visualized the importance of joining a sodality and she chose St Anne's Women's Group. She helps in matters concerning the sodality. She also assists in community services. During observation it was noticed that Futhi was an active participant. She is a Zulu woman. She is a research participant, because of her seniority in the group, as an aspirant.

## **Betty**

Betty is a married woman. She has three children. Her children attend church. Her age fits into the range of between forty and fifty years. She is a domestic worker. She did not finish her lower primary education. She originates from Matatiele, and she rents a room in one of the town flats which is 4 km away from St Kuhle Parish (SKP). She speaks Sesotho and knows a little bit of IsiZulu. She is an aspirant, requester and observer. She assists in matters affecting the sodality. It was observed that Betty is an active congregant who avails herself of whatever services need to be performed in the church. She did not perform well in the interviews because of the language barrier. She is a Sesotho speaking lady. She joined the SACWG in 2017. She is a Catholic member from Matatiele. She said she was willing to join the Sodality many years ago in Matatiele, but she could not since she was working in Pietermaritzburg. She spoke with the SACWG Executive members, and was permitted to join. She is a research participant because of her seniority in the SACWG, as an aspirant.

## **Lihle**

Lihle is a married woman. She has five children and four grandchildren. Her grandchildren attend church. Lihle is between the age of fifty and sixty-five years old. She is not working,

as she is a pensioner. Her husband is also a pensioner. She did not finish her High School Education. She stays in town which is 4km away from the SKP. Lihle is a probationer (newcomer) and will become a full member gradually. She has been a church goer for many years. She joined the SACWG in 2015 after feeling a desire to join. She said her mother was also a member of the same group – St Anne’s Sodality. She is committed to the teachings of the SACWG and of the church in particular. She speaks isiZulu. She is a research participant because of her seniority in the SACWG, a probationer

### **Thandi**

Thandi is a widow. She has four children and six grandchildren. Her children and grandchildren also attend church. She is between the age group of fifty and sixty-five years. She is a pensioner. She speaks isiZulu. She has a Higher Primary Education. She joined the SACWG in 2016. Out of all the sodalities in the church, she preferred SACWG. She said she liked the group because members are grown up women who have conquered many challenges in their lives. She stays in Sodwana Township which is 3 km away from the parish. She is a probationer (new comer) and will later become a full member. She was chosen to participate in the study since she is an active community member, as a probationer.

### **Laura**

Laura is a married woman whose age is in the range from fifty to sixty-five years old. She has four children and five grandchildren. Her husband is a pensioner. The grandchildren attend the church. She is a part-time Adult Educator at a local Adult Education centre. She teaches Adult Basic Education in the evening. She is in possession of a B.Ed (Hons) in Adult Education which she obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). She lives in Shayamoya Township (ST) which is 7 km away from St Kuhle Parish. She is a full member. She is an executive member of the SACWG in the branch, as the Deputy President (DP). She is also the facilitator of the group. She speaks isiZulu. She joined the SACWG in 2000, so she is an old timer. She is the facilitator because of her portfolio in the group – Deputy President. During the focus group interview it was observed that she was unhappy about the quality of responses she received. She was chosen since she is an experienced facilitator, and a full member.

## **Zanele**

Zanele is a married woman with five children and one grandchild. Her age is between fifty and sixty-five years. Some of her children and a grandchild attend church. Zanele is unemployed. She receives a child support grant. Her husband is working, and he is renting a room in town. He does not come home regularly. She passed Matric. She lives in KwaNodwengu which is 10 km from the parish. She is a full member of SACWG. She said she likes the SACWG more than other groups. She was formerly a Methodist member. She joined the Catholic Church as a member because her parents-in-law were Catholic members. Her mother-in-law was a member of SACWG. She learnt about the group through observing her mother-in-law. She began to like the group and she decided to join the SACWG in 2004. She is an executive member of the branch. Zanele is the Chairperson/President of the SACWG and a full member. She oversees the executive and the entire membership as well as the smooth running of the sodality. She speaks isiZulu. She is an active community member, engaged in informal counselling. She supports women and children emotionally, physically and spiritually. She was chosen to partake in the study because of her seniority, as the Chair. During the observation it was noticed that she was able to respond to questions even to those which were a bit difficult to others.

## **Zuzile**

Zuzile is a widower. She has no children. She stays with her extended family members. Her relatives attend church. Her age is in the group range of sixty-six and above eighty years. She is the oldest member of the SACWG, an old timer. She is a pensioner. She is a retired nurse. She passed her Junior Certificate (JC). She stays on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg (PMB) at KwaDweshula which is 15 km away from SKP. She joined the SACWG in 1968. She is a former Dean of the SACWG, that is, a President at Deanery/Regional level. She is an elder who knows almost everything pertaining to the SACWG, such as the prayers, rules and regulations or doctrines, and procedures. She speaks isiZulu. She assists the SACWG with the vast information she possesses. She was chosen to participate in the study because she is an old timer who knows almost all there is to know about the Sodality. She is also an elder in the community who helps with providing advice. It was noticed during both observations and the focus groups that she knows the Handbook and has a lot of experience concerning being a member. The next section discusses the nature of the sodality in particular.

#### **4.2.2 The nature of the SACWG sodality**

The SACWG key values emanate from the bible, these include values such as love, care and neighbourliness. According to the Handbook (2014, p. 11), “SACWG is an association of Catholic married women. Its Patroness is St Anne, a model for every Catholic wife and mother. St Anne was a model of love, loyalty, care and concern.” Zanele (FM and Chair – during focus group interviews (FGI)) affirms:

*For us, SACWG members, the above is regarded as the nature of the sodality and the group’s culture since SACWG members are expected to imitate St Anne’s character and follow her footprints.*

Zanele’s views articulate what is expected as the SACWG Chair. According to Wenger, “these articulations with CoP Members have a purpose and are more focussed on refining performance and improving knowledge of the group” (2007, p. 78). On this basis it may be inferred that members are anticipated to demonstrate the values to themselves as well as to the community at large, thus fulfilling their Christianity and belongingness to SACWG.

The principles of SACWG define and reflect what it means to be a CoP as articulated by Wenger. CoPs are “the groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” (2006, p. 110). The principles and motto are crucial for SACWG to the extent that the motto indicates the way of belonging to the group in particular, and the principles provide distinctiveness to SACWG members. SACWG principles as per the Handbook are: “the personal formation and sanctification of its members; mutual prayer and support so as to enable each one to fulfil her obligations towards God, her family and her neighbour, and the active participation of the members in the mission of the church” (2014, p. 11).

SACWG members become active members in the sodality by participating in activities assigned to the SACWG. The following quotations from the data affirms this.

*SACWG provides opportunity for families to assist Parish programmes by involving themselves in spiritual and educational programs. SACWG is social and service minded. Aspirants get opportunities to explore what SACWG does and consider becoming involved in its events and programmes (Zanele, FM and Chair – FGI).*

*SACWG encourages members to fulfil their vocation with humbleness, dignity and love of St Anne (Thandi, probationer - FGI).*

*SACWG is a Catholic support group for women. Members are committed in providing Christian services to others (Futhi, aspirant – individual interview II).*

*We strive to be the face of friendship and love to show it to everyone we meet, as well as being a welcoming body to new and old members. We are the Disciples of Christ through our works (Laura, FM and a facilitator - II).*

Various statements by participants indicate that SACWG members are striving to maintain their identity within the group and outside the group by adhering to what is expected from them.

SACWG also relies on its motto for Christian formation, as tabulated in the Handbook as “serve the family; serve the church; serve the community” (2014, p. 11). All SACWG members play a fundamental role in the principles of what defines this community.

*Old members of the community are the assets of the sodality since they provide details and directions of SACWG to the new ones (Betty, aspirant – II).*

SACWG, according to its motto, offers its services to the family, the church and the community (Handbook, 2014). SACWG is only for married women as previously stated. According to the Handbook, “God made the family the basic unit of society. Family is the basic social unit for the expression of love between man and woman and the creation and raising of children. The apostolate of the family is uniquely important for the Church and for the Society” (2014, p. 18). It is clear therefore that women are capable of nurturing their children and building strong families by bringing up their children as Christians and apostles and by helping them in their calling in life. Several members are quoted below.

*Family is where most people cultivate their character and learn about love. We are told by the Bible to love one another. Instead we do the opposite – we hate one another in families. There are hidden battles with no solutions. We need to pray for peace in families in order to have a nation which is full of peace (Futhi, aspirant – FGI).*

*The family structure provides the basic context for human development. Poor families are left unattended by their rich family members or relatives, there is no support manifested to uplift the needy. We must treat our family members with unconditional love and care (Thandi, probationer – FGI).*

*It is our duty to support our families spiritually, physically and emotionally. We need each other in families (siyadingana) and we must take care for one another and respect each other. We, as parents are expected to nurture our children with respect, love and support (Zuzile, FM – FGI).*

*My family and extended families have unemployed youth who have their own children. We as family members are endeavouring to take care of them together with their children though it is too tough due to the high unemployment rate. I am seeing some families abandoning those unmarried mothers/fathers together with their children. Sometimes those young people are wandering in the streets, trying to find a way to make a living, and ended up committing crime. Members can stop this by taking care of their families, by supporting and giving them love. We must teach our youth about the importance of marriage and its enrichment programmes (Lihle, probationer – II).*

*SACWG members as parents, their responsibility of bringing up their children as Christians and apostles, is neglected somehow. The family that prays together stays together. We must lead by example by indicating the sacredness of married life to our youth (Laura, FM and facilitator – II).*

*I wish families can work together in teaching and raising their children as Christians and apostles. Family structures must defend the rights and dignity of family life. Family members have rights to education and they need support from the family. I always pray for my family and other neglected families. I always want to help the needy, unfortunately I can't as I am unemployed. We must start caring for our families in order to be able to support the community at large. SACWG is teaching us about caring, I doubt if we are doing this to our satisfaction or we are just doing it (Zanele, FM and Chair – FGI).*

Research participants demonstrated good understanding of the role of the SACWG in relation to their families. Some have learnt about caring for their families although they are not practising it to the fullest. They are hoping to put more efforts into this service which suggests a possible reason why they joined the group initially.

The SACWG members work in collaboration with the Parish Priest and other sodalities in the church to promote Christianity and unity. The parish is an obvious field of apostolate. It is a call of the Diocese and forms part of the whole church. The SACWG shares in Christ's role of prophet. "Without members' help, pastors often cannot work effectively" (Handbook, 2014, p. 22).

*Members work with Priests to solve their own problems and those of the congregants by joint deliberation and efforts. They help by identifying all people in need of care by the PP (Betty, aspirant – FGI).*

*Members get used to working in the Parish in co-operation with their Priests, collaborating with all the apostolic undertakings. We do this and ensure confidentiality (Thandi, the probationer – FGI).*

*We encourage fund-raising projects in the group so as to help our various charitable groups in the church to donate to the needy in the communities (Laura, FM and a facilitator – FGI).*

*Members are encouraged to teach catechism. They are expected to serve on the PPC so as to get involved in church matters (Zuzile, FM – FGI).*

*Members are encouraged to be able to work with other churches and to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Members are encouraged to take care of the PP. We buy groceries (umbondo) as physical support to the PP (Lihle, probationer – FGI).*

The participants' comments above indicate or highlight the significant role of the SACWG in the life of the church. Furthermore, members indicated indirectly that the church as a community create sub places, or 'small CoPs', to support the church and the role they play in supporting the local Priest.

The SACWG members are responsible for partaking in matters affecting their communities. They must feel obliged to work for the common good in their communities as they are the citizens. They endeavour to make their opinions known in order for the civil authorities to act fairly to all and in accordance with the moral law (Handbook, 2014).

*Members' practice evolves. Communities need members' support. SACWG members sometimes do not feel free to voice their opinions where there are debates in the society pertaining to matters affecting the community. They feel reluctant to participate in those debates. However, some of us are trying to work with the community collaboratively for the improvement of social life (Thandi, probationer – FGI).*

*SACWG members interact regularly. Members join and make a more defined and formalized group. They are more attentive to church matters, and they always show their availability. They sometimes turn a blind eye to matters affecting their communities, as long as they do well in church (Futhi, aspirant – FGI).*

*Few SACWG members strive to make their opinion known in communities. They always complain about lack of time because most of community meetings (izimbizo) are usually held on Sundays. They ended up not knowing what is going on in their areas (Zanele, FM and Chair – FGI).*

*Members are keen to work for improvements needed in public and social life to bring them more in line with the gospel. Women are told during their training programme that they are expected to partake in community matters no matter what. They are expected to participate in community development programs, such as organizing a literacy project and/or health and nutrition educational programs for the benefit of the community members, including themselves (Laura, FM and a facilitator – FGI).*

*Our neighbourhood, WIS, makes me think deeply with my Christian life as an individual including SACWG members as Christians. The situation in this vicinity is not perfect. Their houses are in poor*

*condition. I heard by my sister's friend who lives in WIS that the WIS residents are living under poverty line. There is a high rate of employment. Children go to school on empty stomach. There are a lot of social ills one can think of including the breakdown of marriages which lead to other great social issues, to mention a few, drug taking, drunkenness, gambling, mental health problems, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, water scarcity. I sometimes perceive that God will measure SACWG's Christianity by WIS and its social ills in terms of what interventions members consider to apply (Betty, aspirant – FGI).*

*SACWG members are urged to get involved in discussions related to community issues since they are also affected as citizens. They can also join trade unions at work to strive for better working conditions. Their involvement is crucial (Zuzile, FM – FGI).*

On this basis it may be inferred that the SACWG members overlook the principle – “mutual prayer and support so as to enable each one to fulfil her obligations towards God, her family and her neighbour” as well as the motto – “serve the community”. These are key areas that the author of this study is particularly interested in. The SACWG, according to its motto, offers services to the family, the church and the community. Unfortunately, there is limited evidence that demonstrates service to community. The next section discussed the mission and vision of SACWG.

The mission, according to the Handbook, is that the “SACWG learning programme aims to provide for the spiritual, religious and apostolic formation of SACWG members, solidly based on the Bible and the teachings of the church. SACWG commits itself in making members of the parish to understand and appreciate their role. The vision being the inspiration to sustain the commitment of the SACWG members in their earnest endeavour, in their daily life, to live up to the ideal that St Anne is for them. SACWG is a self-sufficient and self-reliant group which connects to the larger community” (2014, p. 7). The vision of SACWG members is to strive to encourage one another as a group and as individuals to be involved in activities that support their parish.

*We actively seek to create an atmosphere of comfort, companionship and charity in our church. SACWG members are significant members of the church, they support their well-being and the smooth running of the church. We always put a smile on our faces and work collaboratively with other groups' structures, Pastoral Parish Council (PPC) and Pastoral Finance Council (PFC) (Laura, FM and a facilitator – FGI).*

*The SACWG learning programme encourages women blessed with the gift of motherhood to fulfil their vocation with the humility, dignity and love of St Anne. Some of the members are Lay Ministers. They perform other activities in the absence of PP, such as burying the deceased, taking the lead in unveiling ceremonies and so forth (Zanele, FM and Chair – FGI).*

*The bible plays an important role in SACWG learning. There are prescribed verses which are embedded in the principles and motto. They provide a vivid understanding on these. We are participating in some church activities. We are trying to respond to the needs of the less fortunate people in our parish though we are struggling due to the fact that most of us are unemployed (Zuzile, FM – FGI).*

*SACWG members endeavour to maintain their identity to such an extent that the church structure can value their commitment. I am a Catechist (Lihle, probationer – FGI).*

*This promotes a believing community. To serve God's people especially the children and youth of our parish. I wish to participate in programmes which brings youth closer to God (Thandi, probationer – FGI).*

*We encourage people to celebrate Christ's presence among us through the sacrament and worship (Futhi, aspirant – FGI).*

One can conclude that SACWG members play a significant part in various fields of the apostolate as the women's role in society is growing ever more active. The SACWG, as a CoP, operates according to their conditions, including assisting people with a shared interest,

connecting with each other and providing basic support. Members support one another (Wenger, 2007). The St Anne's group is integrated with the way the Catholic Church works. Key structural and cultural elements are aligned accordingly. The next section discusses the different types of learning that take place in the SACWG.

### ***4.2.3 Learning places in SACWG***

This section presents the learning places as regular events in the SACWG. These different places have specific purposes for the SACWG members and learning takes place accordingly. These learning places include annual retreats and conventions, Tuesday and Thursday gatherings, monthly meetings and the Heritage celebration. The next section engages with information about the annual retreats and conventions as places of learning which demonstrate the purpose and nature of learning in each place.

#### ***4.2.3.1 Annual Retreats and Conventions***

SACWG members gather annually for retreats at Deanery level and conventions at Diocese level. As the Handbook points out, the purpose of the Annual retreats and conventions is that “it provides an opportunity to SACWG members to deepen their life of prayer and their personal commitment to God” (2014: 17).

*All Deaneries meet for their annual retreat at Diocese level and all parishes gather for theirs at Deanery level. All these annual retreats are conducted at designated places which are big enough to accommodate all SACWG members from Deaneries and parishes. Both retreats are pioneered by the executive members for both Diocesan and Deanery levels (Zanele, FM and Chair – II).*

*At these meetings, members discuss the methods and results of their yearly activities and consider their daily life in the light of the Gospel. These annual retreats contribute towards member formation spiritually, physically and emotionally (Zuzile, FM – II).*

*We, as SACWG members participate in these annual retreats for our benefit. These gatherings are facilitated by the Dean and her executive members at the Deanery level and the President and her executive members at the Diocese level (Laura, FM and a facilitator – II).*

*I like to participate in these gatherings in order to observe what the full members and probationers do. Our attendance at these gatherings is crucial since we learn many things through observations (Lihle, aspirant – II).*

*We demonstrate good conduct, a spirit of service and commitment to the principles of the sodality (Futhi, aspirant – II).*

*The SACWG members attend these annual retreats for knowledge construction. We learn about SACWG doctrines and observe all that is taking place. We are aware of the principles and motto of the sodality. We participate in socialization with the old timers in order to deepen our knowledge. We engage ourselves in knowledge sharing (Laura, FM and a facilitator – II).*

Annual retreats and conventions are obviously significant places of learning. All three different SACWG membership categories represent themselves in these gatherings as they serve as places of learning.

#### **4.2.3.2 Tuesday and Thursday gatherings**

According to the participants, it is the culture of the SACWG to gather on Tuesdays to honour the death hour of St Anne who died on Tuesday at 15H00. On Thursdays, women gather at a member's house for mutual praying and listening to the Word of God. They support one another spiritually, physically and emotionally

*There are prayers which are recited during this hour on Tuesdays. Women are also taught to pray for one another on this day and also pray the rosary of St Anne (Lihle, probationer – II).*

*Women gather on Thursdays as well for praying and giving support to one another, either emotional, physical or spiritual (Futhi, aspirant – II).*

*In these gatherings, members are prone to learning. All members participate. The President and the DP facilitate in these gatherings (Laura, FM and a facilitator – II).*

*Aspirants observe and learn different activities pertaining to these gatherings. Probationers do what full members do and become familiar with the activities. They learn from the experts (Zanele, FM – II).*

*Full members are familiar with the activities, they participate in teaching the new members by sharing knowledge with them (Laura, FM and a facilitator – FGI).*

*There are sometimes practical tasks or activities which are performed by members as part of their gatherings (Zanele, FM – FGI).*

#### **4.2.3.3 Monthly meetings**

In view of the SACWG members, the sodality meetings are very important opportunities for the formation of all members. The SACWG executive puts great emphasis on regular monthly meetings where members engage themselves in sharing activities. Attendance at these meetings is vital to SACWG members since their participation in activities proclaim the group's existence.

*These meetings are designed in such a way that time is devoted to prayer, study and discussing the Handbook and the Bible. This helps members to know the Word of God and the teachings of SACWG. All members take part in this gathering. Monthly meetings are conducted every second week of the month at the parish (Zuzile, FM – II).*

*Members have the standard agenda which contains flexibility for some unplanned matters. We attend and involve ourselves in discussions of the Handbook and Bible and other matters pertaining to the gathering (Thandi, probationer – II).*

*Meetings are designed in such a way that members learn something new. We attend and observe in order to construct knowledge (Betty, aspirant – II).*

*Time is devoted to prayer, study and discussion in which members partake. Study and discussion is associated with books such as the Bible and Handbook (Zanele, FM and Chair – FGI).*

*The Bible and Handbook help members to know the Word of God and teachings of St Anne as well as of the church. We are given time to share verses and doctrines of the sodality (Lihle, probationer – FGI).*

*Face to face meetings play an important role in SACWG, because they are conducted to strengthen the communication and relationships amongst the group members. It is important to attend. We attend and give opinions where possible regarding the discussions which are taking place during the gatherings. We are aware that new members are learning from us either directly or indirectly (Laura, FM and a facilitator – II).*

SACWG utilizes the standard agenda for all their meetings. This is shown below:-

<p>Time: 1 ½ to 2 hours</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Hymn and brief prayer</li><li>2. Brief opening remarks to welcome members, etc.</li><li>3. Roll-call and apologies</li><li>4. Approval of Minutes and matters arising (brief)</li><li>5. Reports on work done</li><li>6. Prayers for the living and the dead</li><li>7. Correspondence</li><li>8. Discussions, e.g. planning events, distribution of work, evaluation of work</li><li>9. Finance, e.g. subscriptions, etc.</li><li>10. Prepared Bible study or Bible sharing or reading and discussing part of the Handbook</li><li>11. Learning new hymns</li><li>12. Closing prayer and hymn.</li></ol> <p>NOTE: This agenda will sometimes be too much for one meeting and it should be adjusted according to the needs. However, items 8, 10 and 11 should be dealt with on a regular basis.</p>
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**Figure 4: SACWG Suggested Monthly Meeting Procedure adapted from the Handbook (2014, p. 107)**

The above figure indicates the agenda which is usually followed during the monthly meetings. This is a significant figure to ascertain how monthly meetings are conducted at Parish level.

Item 8 above indicates that learning during the meeting takes place during discussions where members interact about the planning of events and what needs to be done and how. Through these discussions, members come with the solution as to how to implement the events. Item 10 is vital, and it is where the interaction and listening skills are demonstrated during the sharing of bible verses as well as the discussion of the planned part of the Handbook. Members do this collaboratively. Their learning also involves item 11 of the agenda where they spend a few minutes learning the new hymns they have heard from attending retreats, conventions, and so forth. Meetings are compelled to run for a maximum of two hours only.

*During this time, I watch the space, observing who is saying what. Gradually members reach a decision. I enjoy when they practise singing new hymns. I also practise silently (Futhi, aspirant – FGI).*

Zuzile (FM – FGI) says:

*Discussions of what needs to be done forms part of learning since we listen and think critically about the planning and implementation. Learning new songs is stimulating since members raise different tunes to choose from. Singing is a talent as well as a skill. We eventually choose one good tune.*

*The meetings entail problem-solving skills. We learn to think critically and come up with a desired solution for all. We learn to sing in order to be good singers (Thandi, probationer – FGI).*

Members' input demonstrates that SACWG members value their monthly meetings as they contribute to their formation as Christians.

#### **4.2.3.4 Heritage Celebration**

Participants claim that SACWG members are encouraged to entertain themselves in any activities pertaining to Heritage Day. They demonstrate their cultural activities where all Parishes in the Deanery compete for positions first - third and then proceed to the Diocese level. Members wear traditional attire during this celebration. Laura (FM and a facilitator – FGI) concludes:

*Members prepare themselves for these collaborations from their Parishes to compete at Deanery level through the items they produce and present.*



**Figure 5: A selection of African Zulu crafts and assorted food presented at a Heritage Day celebration by SACWG members**

The above figure demonstrates the capabilities of SACWG members. Their talents are displayed. They learn from each other and within the sodality. Members play different roles here – they become learners as they learn how to make some of the items demonstrated above. They also become facilitators as they teach others how to do these things.

*Women make a living from these items by selling them internally, that is, to the group members; and externally to the public (Zanele, FM – FGI).*

Members do craft work individually or in groups. They demonstrate their capabilities and talents.

*We do beads and ornaments. We also do traditional cooking such as samp and beans, amadumbes and so forth (Betty, aspirant – II).*

*We like traditional food, it is nutritious (Lihle, probationer – II).*

*Members also do craft work such as Zulu mats, necklaces and bangles made out of beads, lids of Zulu beer containers (izinkamba) made out of grass and decorated with assorted colours of wool, small decorated shields, and so forth (Laura, FM and a facilitator – II).*

*There are workshops which are conducted for the purpose of teaching members about skills development at Parish level (Zanele, FM – FGI).*

*Experts become facilitators in these workshops. Experts come from all different angles, that is, aspirants, probationers and full members. They teach members different skills based on the interests of the SACWG members (Lihle, probationer – FGI).*

*These workshops become the platforms for members to indicate their talents and gifts. There is no discrimination pertaining to participation in these workshops. All members who are interested to gain skills may attend, that is, aspirants, probationers and full members, all are welcome (Betty, aspirant – FGI).*

*Members' participation is hands-on and they strive to share their presentations and projects including craft work, sewing, knitting, bead work, food, and so forth. Members participate in numbers since their learning is of a practical nature. Participation is the same at all stages of membership, members learn from each other. They jointly prepare their items per Parish and demonstrate their presentations at Deanery level (Laura, FM and a facilitator – FGI).*

*The Deanery Executives scrutinize the presentations and announce the Parish which presented the good quality. Similarly, the Diocesan Executives inspects*

*items per Deaneries and announce the Deanery which submitted the best items*  
(Thandi, probationer – FGI).

SACWG members are encouraged to entertain themselves in any activities pertaining to Heritage Day.

*Members' participation is hands-on and they strive to share their presentations, projects, food and knowledge at the Parish level initially and later at the Deanery level. This is marvellous to me, I have acquired a lot of skills doing craft work, cooking and growing a vegetable garden. Members are learning from other members and learning within the group* (Zanele, FM and Chair – FGI).

*I like singing traditional songs and performing the traditional dance. I have learned how to sing and dance and I am now confident* (Futhi, aspirant – II).

The SACWG, through its activities, facilitates and encourages participation and fellowship amongst its members. Heritage celebrations are significant places of learning, members look at many different items produced by different members and this triggers the desire to learn different skills for their personal benefit. The Heritage Day celebrations are more informal learning places because the roles of the teacher and the learner are not clearly defined. Members learn by doing and this sustains their learning.

The learning places demonstrate two conceptions of education: non-formal and informal education. The non-formal has a clearly designed programme (curriculum) while the informal education facilitates informal learning which is characterised by embeddedness in the Christian activities. There is no separation between the activity and learning. The next section looks at the geographical information of the church and its socio-cultural context.

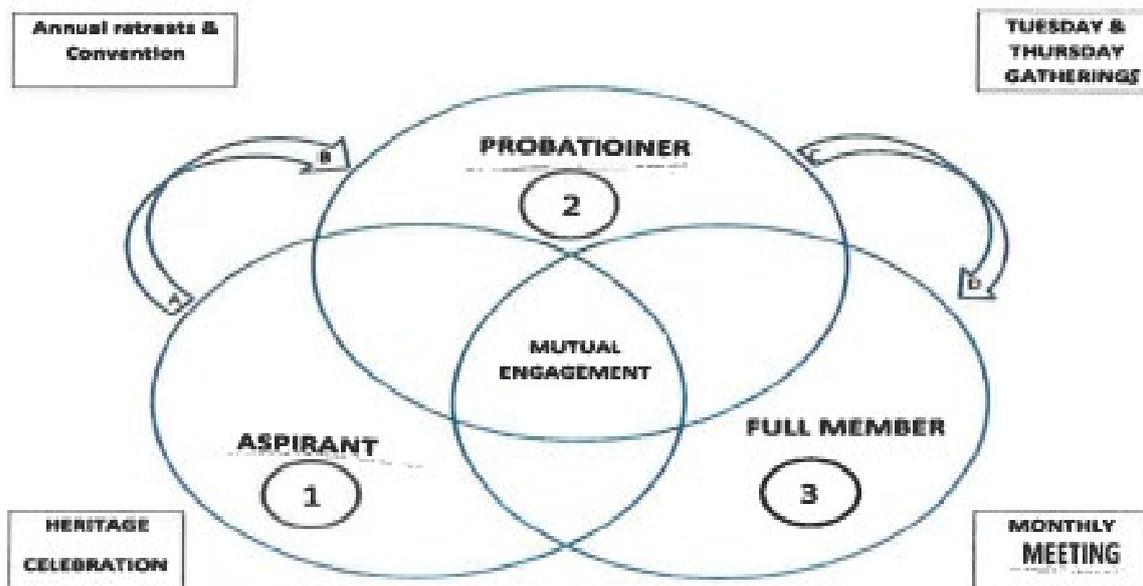
### **4.3 The discussions**

The Case Study presented above describes the SACWG from the research participants' perspectives and their Handbook perspective. The concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) as a theoretical framework informed the unpacking of learning in SACWG. As Wenger observes, "people embrace themselves in partnerships because they spot each other as a partner or an expert and formulate a learning bond" (2014, p. 112).

This section presents discussions on learning within and amongst its members. This will be done through a presentation of the four identified learning places in the SACWG, that is, the annual retreats and conventions; Tuesday and Thursday gatherings; monthly meetings and Heritage Day celebrations. The intention of the section is to demonstrate how these places of learning facilitate identity, meaning, practice and a sense of community for its members. The section will first elucidate learning in the SACWG, as learning in Communities of Practice (CoP). The last part of the section will respond to the research questions.

#### 4.3.1 SACWG as a Community of Practice

In this section I demonstrate how, in my view, the SACWG is a CoP, building further arguments initiated in the previous chapter. According to Wenger (1998), there are three characteristics that must be met, namely: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire. Each of these are presented and discussed in the next section.



**Diagram 1: SACWG as a Community of Practice**

The diagram above demonstrates that members of the SACWG share mutual engagement, the probationers at the periphery and full members at the centre. Furthermore, it shows the structured movement from Stage One to Two to Three, each movement is defined as A – B and C – D. The diagram further highlights the place of learning (participation) where the learning A – B and C – D can happen in this study. A – B refers to a movement from aspirant to

probationer and C – D a shift from probationer to full member. I highlight Annual retreats and conventions; Tuesday and Thursday gatherings; Monthly meetings and Heritage celebrations. The rest of the chapter is a discussion which unpacks the diagram.

#### ***4.3.1.1 Mutual Engagement***

According to Wenger, “mutual engagement is where members build the community and the practice by conducting practice-related interactions with each other on a regular basis” (1998, p. 99). It is clear therefore that members do this by conducting practice-related interactions with each other on a regular basis. The mission, vision and principles of the SACWG are articulated by the Handbook and members seek to achieve these through participation. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together are highlighted by Wenger (1998). Members embark on discussions as a way forward for doing things collaboratively.

Wenger highlights five key points that define mutual engagement as: “sustained mutual relationships; shared ways of engaging in doing things together; the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation is defined by the information that one has at each stage and therefore the role they can play within the group as well as absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process” (1998, p. 125). In the SACWG, this often harmonious journey is reflected in the shift from aspirant to probationer and finally to being a full member. These to a large extent are defined by the Handbook but interpreted by the Priest and enforced by the group leadership. These are understood by members as shared ways of participating in the group. The four learning places, that is, annual retreats and conventions, Tuesday and Thursday gatherings, monthly meeting and Heritage Day celebrations are a clear indication and demonstrate this indicator.

*SACWG members meet and interact once a month in the monthly meetings in the SKP. We also meet during annual retreats both at the Deanery level and Diocesan level; at the Tuesday and Thursday gatherings as well as at Heritage celebrations and during preparations for Heritage Day. We also meet by networking. I must say ... ‘we always meet and interact, and this is our practice’ (Zanele, full member and a Chairperson during the individual interviews).*

Again, the learning places define the agendas to be discussed and SACWG members have full understanding of these. Wenger (1998) states that a quick setup of a problem to be discussed is tabled on the agenda. In the SACWG, members turn to each other to discuss

problems. Zuzile (full member in individual interviews), revealed that women are faced with many challenges which they cannot resolve.

*The challenges I had in my marriage forced me to learn perseverance. That was not enough, I then decided to speak out and share my problems with the SACWG members. What I learned is that in each partnership there will always be a practitioner who is capable of facilitating problem-solving skills. I learned a lot and my burden was resolved. I am now able to advise others who have the same difficulties, to speak out (Zuzile, full member in individual interviews).*

It is clear therefore that there should be regular dialogues and involvement that enhance the level of participation. In my opinion, interaction is very crucial for the SACWG members as their tasks are embedded in it. Lave and Wenger, claim that “mutual engagement refers to the amount and pattern of interaction among members of the community, it shapes the group’s culture and its practices” (2001, p. 66). Furthermore, Wenger (2014) found that, it is easier for people belonging to the same practice to seek help from one another when encountering challenges. Learning enterprise is unexpectedly formed, and more ideas are amalgamated for resolutions. It can be seen that interaction and problem-solving skills are significant in the groups.

Members as they interact and share ideas, are engaging themselves in sharing understanding and activities. This is integrated with practice. As Wenger comments that “practice is demonstrated when people are engaged in actions and when they create and negotiate their meanings with each other. The information flows very fast and members then are prone to fast-track invention” (2014, p. 80). Thus, it can be concluded that practice and interaction work well together.

#### ***4.3.1.2 Joint Enterprise***

Members collectively negotiate what their community is all about and hold each other accountable to this understanding. Lave and Wenger observe joint enterprise as “the common purpose that binds the people together and offers a merging goal and ensures that there is a stability for their actions” (2001, p. 76). Furthermore, Wenger mentions that “knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise is crucial in joint enterprise” (1998, p. 60). It is clear therefore that the SACWG’s gatherings are governed by a common purpose and their goals are formulated accordingly, that is, each gathering has specific

goals which members must accomplish. Members share techniques of doing things together in a better way.

According to Wenger, “the indicators of joint enterprise are: substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs; different places of participation and the progressive process of belonging as defined by participation” (1998, p. 125-126). Participation in obeying church doctrines is essential.

*We do things pertaining to the SACWG in our way bearing in mind the church's rules and regulations (Zanele, full member and a Chairperson during focus group interview).*

Knowing what others know, what they can do and how they can contribute to an enterprise in the different places of participation and the different stages of belonging are keys in the facilitation of common knowledge.

*Each gathering is governed by its agenda which is embedded in its purpose. The goals for gatherings are interwoven in those agendas. All occasions take place accordingly. These gatherings are very important for our formation, as a result I do not want to miss them (Laura, full member and a facilitator in individual interview).*

Mutually defining identities are evident in the uniform of the SACWG (*isambatho*). Within the Catholic Church women who choose to belong to a women's group, such as SACWG can be identified by the uniform. These groups wear uniforms (*isambatho*) which differ in colour and differentiate their principles, values and mission. The colours bear different meanings which vary from church to church.

*The uniforms make it easier to identify identity of members especially in large gatherings where women of different denominations gathered. We were taught to love and obey the uniform as it encourages us to be loyal to God and to the sodality (Betty, aspirant during individual interviews).*

Lave and Wenger (1991) report that learning is in the form that the legitimacy of participation as a way of belonging flourishes. The indications are therefore that knowledge

is shared among the group members which results in shared actions thus having shared products.

#### ***4.3.1.3 Shared Repertoire***

Lave and Wenger (2001) refer to the continual development and maintenance of a shared repertoire of procedures, techniques and actions. In addition, Lave & Wenger mention aspects of shared repertoire namely: -“Shared history –participants are the cofounders of the repertoire, they are part of the shared history, they have a sense of identity and belonging” (2001, p. 68). Members are the resources of the community. They are equipped to share stories, laugh together, and communicate well. They find out how they contribute to the enterprise (Wenger, 1998). It must therefore be recognised that SACWG members depend largely on sharing their histories or information and building on that.

*During the annual retreat gatherings especially at Diocesan Level, SACWG members are categorized according to their membership phases and given time to share their histories and stories on different topics, for example, on how to let go of horrible things done by your loved ones or close families together with the sharing of dilemmas. This is amazing as we are able to acquire knowledge on how to do things better for our benefit (Zanele, full member and Chairperson in focus group interview).*

Wherever there is a shared repertoire, there is a richness of language for communicating meaning. It is advantageous in large groups to express meaning because there are more people to work with (Lave & Wenger, 2001). This emphasizes that language is fundamental in interactions. People communicate well in their vernacular language. The SACWG members in the study were communicating in IsiZulu, even the interviews were conducted in IsiZulu to avoid translations which may jeopardize the actual meaning of data. However, translations were done in transcriptions.

*Communication through our mother-tongue, that is, IsiZulu made things far better, I was able to express my concern freely in gatherings and I was able to understand feedback with ease. Our Handbook is also written in IsiZulu, we understand it (Futhi, aspirant – II).*

Interaction is useful as people can express their views and feelings through communicating without ambiguity. “The elements of repertoire are viewed and used through interpretation” (Lave & Wenger, 2001:88). The evidence seems to indicate that the SACWG uses elements such as the agenda, Handbook, and Bible as their specific tools. They also wear a uniform which symbolizes their identity and their uniqueness. They also buy groceries for the PP – *umbondo* once in a four-month period.

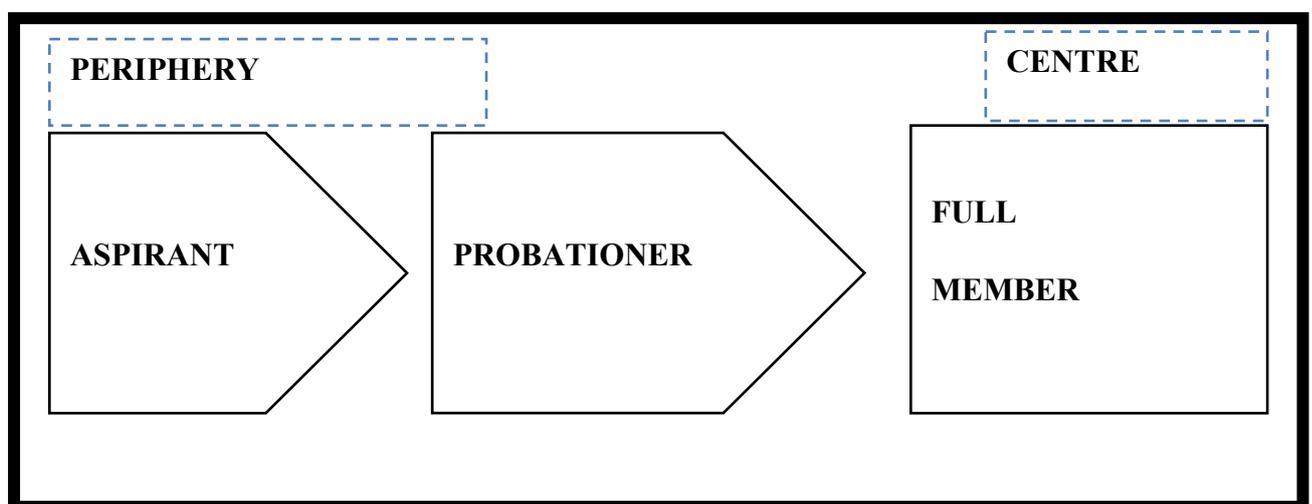
*We share personal stories, we crack jokes, we laugh and laugh, we communicate even through WhatsApp, Facebook, SMS and telephones. We engage ourselves in mutual praying and visiting the sick (Zuzile, full member in individual interviews).*

The work of Wenger (1998) indicates the importance of meeting the characteristics such as mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire in order to become a CoP. It is clear therefore that these characteristics are vital in order for the group to be functional.

#### **4.3.2 Learning in the SACWG as Learning in a Community of Practice**

In this section I intend to focus on learning within SACWG as a CoP. In other words, I look at A – B and C – D of the diagram presented above. SACWG learning is embedded in the sodality situated in the community. Members have a purpose and are focussed on improving performance and enhancing knowledge of the group. I will present a discussion on learning as movement from periphery to the centre.

##### **4.3.2.1 Learning as Movement – Periphery to Centre**



**Diagram 2: Learning as movement: Periphery to centre**

Wenger (1998: 92) views learning in the CoP, “as a movement from a periphery to the centre”. In this section I will discuss and make an argument that learning in the SACWC is the movement from being an aspirant (on the periphery) to being a full member (at the centre). The illustrations are according to the different stages of membership and the different learning places of the SACWG members. Learning as movement from the periphery to the centre is clearly demonstrated by movement from being an aspirant to a probationer and to a full member. SACWG learning evolves through the three stages of membership: aspirants, probationers and full members (Handbook, 2014:25-27).

#### **4.3.2.1.1      *Aspirant***

Anyone who wishes to join the sodality makes her wish known to the Executive of the local branch. She is known as the requester and an observer. Aspirant’s application for membership must be accepted by all members of the branch/sodality including the Executive. The Aspirant wears a black skirt, black shoes, black stockings, a black hat and a white blouse. She is expected to give evidence of good conduct; a spirit of service to the Church and the sodality and commitment to the ideals of the sodality. Aspirant is observed for three months. A decision is taken by the Executive whether the aspirant can proceed to the next phase, that is, probationer’s stage. There is no special ceremony undertaken to welcome the aspirant to the Sodality (Handbook, 2014).

*Our learning is through observation. We observe everything that takes place in the group. We are asked to make ourselves familiar with the Handbook in order to get knowledge about the group’s culture and its doctrines (Futhi, aspirant in individual interview).*

*I enjoy wearing uniform even at this initial stage. I joined SACWG because I liked it from the bottom of my heart. I am going to tolerate whatever hardship I may encounter. I am willing to go further with my training until I become a full member (Betty, aspirant in individual interview).*

*Members at this stage are expected to organize all the required documents for admission criteria. If they are coming from other Parishes, they make requests for the documents which can be posted or faxed to our Parish Priest (PP). At the same time, members are expected to observe all the activities undertaken by SACWG for their benefit (Zanele, FM and Chair in individual interview).*

#### 4.3.2.1.2 *Probationer*

The Handbook (2014), points out that a probationer must produce proof that she has been confirmed and validly married in the eyes of the Catholic Church. The probationer wears a black skirt, purple blouse, black shoes, black stockings, a black hat and a long purple cape as well as a small crucifix which she will continue wearing for at least a further nine months. The probationers undergo training for twenty-seven weeks studying the Handbook and the Bible. During the probationary period, probationers should study the Handbook, learn and observe the doctrines of the Sodality, receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, if necessary, and obtain consent from their husbands. There is a special ceremony done for the enrolment of probationers.

*It is not an easy task to organize documents for admission to the SACWG. I am excited that I am a probationer now. I have started my training which takes place on a Sunday basis before the Mass. The Handbook is user friendly as well as the Bible. I like my uniform and I am working hard to proceed to the next stage. I can't wait to see myself being a full member (Lihle, probationer in focus group interview).*

*All I have to do is to read the Handbook, read the Bible and observe what the full members do. I noticed that I have to be present all the time and concentrate to my learning. I have heard that there will be an assessment that will take place towards the end of the training period – this really intimidates me. However, I have to prepare myself by reading the Handbook thoroughly (Thandi, probationer in focus group interview).*

*This is not an easy stage for the learners. I, as a facilitator, must adhere to learners' learning style and consider their learning pace. They are full of anxiety and excitement at the same time. I have to make sure that all their outstanding documents are available before their reception to full membership (Laura, FM and facilitator in focus group interview).*

#### 4.3.2.1.3 *Full member*

After one year the aspirant may be received as a full member of the branch. New members are received on the Feast of St Anne. The Deputy President (DP) of the branch assists the new members to prepare themselves for the day of the reception. A member should receive Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist in preparation for the reception to full membership. The reception ceremony is conducted by the Spiritual Adviser (SA) or the Parish Priest (PP) during the Holy Mass. Members wear a black skirt, purple blouse, black shoes, black stockings, a black hat, long purple cape and a medal. A medal is a sign of belonging to the Sodality and being under the protection of the Saint (St). It is worn hanging from a purple ribbon when the uniform is used (Handbook, 2014).

*I was excited on the day of reception as a full member. The presence of my family members made me proud and I realized that I have done it. I am now a confident member (Zanele, full member and a Chair in focus group interview).*

*The full uniform made me too excited. The presence of the Deanery Executive pushed my excitement to the next level. The knowledge I gained throughout the training uplifted my faith and helped me to change my previous behaviour to an acceptable one (Zuzile, full member – FGI).*

*Learning never stops in the SACWG. We always learn new things during monthly meetings or annual retreats, or during Heritage Day celebrations or on Tuesday and Thursday gatherings. To be a full member, encourages one to keep on learning in order to be a proud and confident member (Laura, FM and a facilitator – FGI).*

According to Ardichvili *et al.* (2003), members must participate actively in community life in order to create and share knowledge. Likewise, Amin and Roberts state that “knowledge sharing among members, depends on the kind of community to which they belong” (2008, p. 44). In addition, Fang and Chiu claim that “knowledge is the key to sustaining the community as well as being the most valuable resource to its members” (2010, p. 61). It is clear therefore that participation and knowledge sharing are crucial to the SACWG and in CoP. Members are keen to attend the gatherings since they are in the physical spaces for knowledge acquisition.

*Learning is always taking place in SACWG, we always learn and we are ready for that. We share our histories, we share knowledge on how to perform group's task. We always seek for knowledge in order to know how to do things better* (Laura, full member and the facilitator in individual interview).

The next section discusses the key research questions for this study.

### **4.3.3 Answering Research Questions**

This section discusses and respond to the research questions as the themes of this study.

#### **4.3.3.1 What is the nature and process of learning that takes place in the St Anne's Catholic Women's Group (SACWG)?**

Learning in the group is non-formal and informal. Werquin states, “the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is an important means for making the ‘lifelong learning for all’ agenda a reality for all and to reshape learning to better match the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economies and open societies. It is non-formal because as it gives some flexibility between formal and informal learning. It is informal because learning is involuntary and an inescapable part of daily life. Learning that is non-formal is partly intentional and partly incidental. Informal learning is exclusively incidental” (2007, p. 85). The following discussion includes an explanation of formal, non-formal and informal learning, as well as embedded learning, situated learning and experiential learning.

Non-formal learning (NFL) is either intentional or arranged by an institution. It bears no credits. Since it is not provided by an institution, it does not lead to certification. Assessment is done through measuring how well people have become proficient at the work they are doing instead of measuring how much people have learnt. People learn in the process (Werquin, 2007). UNESCO (2009) has expressed a similar view by stating that NFL does not lead to certification. However, it is structured since it has objectives, learning time and or learning support.

Informal learning (IL) does not lead to certification, it has no objectives, no learning time and or no learning support. IL is not intended, it just happens. People learn all the time from daily experiences and activities. It is habitually unconscious (UNESCO, 2009). Werquin (2007) has indicated that informal learning is not organized, unplanned and most of the time classified as experiential learning (EL). It has neither intention nor objectives.

Embedded learning is also pivotal in SACWG. Furthermore, Voice indicated that “learning is embedded because it provides immediacy; it stresses collaboration; it deals with content management and it integrates learning with knowledge management. Learning is from experience and observation. Embedded learning entails learning while doing” (2012, p. 69). In short, people acquire skills by working alongside others who are more knowledgeable, engaging in tasks that challenge them to think differently and critically. The most natural way for people to learn is through formal and informal mentoring and apprenticeship relationships.

The action of SACWG members is situated in their role as members of a community. Clancey (1995, p. 82), believes that “learning is also situated because it illustrates how people create and interpret descriptions of what they are doing. Situated learning (SL) is concerned with how learning occurs every day. SL is about the nature of human knowledge. SL tends to be within a domain (a situation).” It is clear therefore that members learn within the group. Enculturation takes place as members learn group’s culture.

SACWG learning is situated in the sodality and it varies according to the stages of membership and different learning places. Rickinson mentions that “learning is a process rather than a product” (2001, p. 75). On the same lines, Wenger (1998) emphasizes that this kind of learning entails a process of engagement in a CoP. The CoP theory describes learning through practice and participation, that is, situated learning.

Learning is also experiential or doable. According to Kolb’s experiential Learning Cycle learners start with concrete experience and “it is where the learner actively experiences an activity. This is followed by reflective observation, where the learner consciously reflects back on that experience. This leads to abstract conceptualization which entails thinking and that is where the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory of what is observed. Finally, an active experimentation or a plan is reached where the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or plan for a forthcoming experience. Experiential learning (EL) is a method of educating through first-hand experience. Skills, knowledge and experience are attained outside of the classroom setting, which may include internships, field trips, service-learning projects, and so forth” (2014, p. 63). It is clear therefore that SACWG members go through all these stages of EL in order to become practitioners of the sodality. They start from the periphery and move to the centre where they are regarded as competent and knowledgeable through legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). “This learning is created over time through a process of Legitimate

Peripheral Participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 80). This enhances the learning of the novices as they became the experts by moving towards the centre.

#### ***4.3.3.2 How does learning impact on lives of the St Anne’s Catholic group of women in this study?***

Learning impacts on women’s lives at different levels. The stated purpose of the group is to develop healthy families and spiritual growth. The different activities in the SAWCG demonstrate this point. Furthermore, the relationship between women and the church is also improved through the learning that takes place within the group. However, and importantly, all the activities presented and discussed show that SAWCG is internally focussed, that is, it focuses on women within the group, the church and the Deanery. There seem to be a gap between the group and the larger community which was part of the reason this study was undertaken to bring what is learnt within the group to the real world in which SACWG members live.

The SACWG learning impacts on women’s lives differently, according to their stages of membership and according to different learning places. These impacts affect SACWG at both a micro level and a macro-level, that is, Parish, SACWG, Deanery and the Diocese.

##### **(a) Annual retreats and conventions**

Members gain momentum at these gatherings which sometimes take place at selected Parishes organized by the Deaneries with the permission of the Diocese. Members attain personal and Christian formation. Aspirants stated that they are able to share their experiences through storytelling. Probationers mentioned that they attain formation. Full members point out that they share experiences. This aligns with Wallace, when he talks about negotiation of meaning and experience, “learning has existed for as long as people have been learning and sharing their experiences through storytelling” (2007, p. 67). Bandura mentions that “Most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed” (1977, p. 100).

##### **(b) Tuesday and Thursday gatherings**

Members are practitioners, they learnt through participation and socialization. According to Kolb “members have accomplished experiential learning to the extent that they see and remember; they do and understand” (2014, p. 72). Aspirants (in the focus group interview) mentioned that women are supportive. Probationers (in the focus group interview) pointed out that women are prayerful and supportive. Full members (in the focus group interviews) stated

that women are prayerful. This aligns with Wenger when she talks about the modes of belonging and states that “practitioners are encouraged to take collective responsibility for their learning” (2014, p. 56). It is clear therefore that members must prove ownership of their learning and ensure participation.

**(c) Monthly meetings**

Members are aware that these meetings are fundamental, that is, members can engage in shared activities. Aspirants (in the focus group interview) stated that they feel accepted and valued by SACWG members, they get involved in group’s activities. Probationers (in the focus group interview) pointed out that participation is vital, and it promotes mutual engagement and trust. Full members (in the focus group interview) pointed out that they can now speak out if dissatisfied. They also emphasized transformation and participation. This aligns with Wenger, who mentions that “people engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour” (2007, p. 73). In my opinion, women participate mutually in activities assigned to the sodality.

**(d) Heritage Day celebrations**

Members acquired skills development through these gatherings, they self-reliant. Aspirants (in focus group interviews) stated that these events are useful for member retention and for income-generation projects. Probationers affirm that members are talented and gifted. Full members mentioned that they are independent and talented. Lave and Wenger see learning as “the increasing participation in the group, concerns the whole person acting in the world. The focus is on the ways in which learning is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations – this is a relational view of the person and learning” (1991, p. 74).

The study revealed these impacts of SACWG learning, namely: “learning involves a relatively permanent change in behaviour which results from practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59). Members (in focus group interviews) pointed out that their behaviours have changed since they affiliated themselves with SACWG. Members support social organisation of the group through its culture and context. They perform different functions within the church. They also perform in family and community activities. “The Women’s Group is involved in worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship and ministry” (Taylor, 2004, p. 49). Women are empowered by the Holy Spirit to integrate what they have learnt into their lives and the world. This aligns with Knowles and Swanson (1998) who emphasize prior experience of the learner which influences learning and distinguishes individual differences and gives adults self-identity. It is clear

therefore that members share their experiences, good or bad, in order to acquire knowledge through meaning making.

#### ***4.3.3.3 What are the perceptions of the women in the group about their learning experiences?***

For the research participants, the entire learning of SACWG is dependent on their Handbook. This is appropriate to be utilized by any individual seeking spiritual growth in any walk of life. For them the Handbook is in line with the present teaching of the church on the Christian life and apostolic formation. Learning supports the growth and effectiveness of SACWG. “Learning is constructed by the learner rather than received from the teacher” (Wenger, 1998, p. 57). It must therefore be recognised that storytelling, and sharing of experiences and ideas by members of the group are very crucial for knowledge construction.

In studying the data collected, SACWG members had different perceptions pertaining to their learning experiences. The perceptions varied according to the SACWG different learning places as well as different stages of members.

##### **(a) Annual retreats and conventions**

Aspirants (in focus group interviews) stated that they learn very well by sitting, listening and watching what the members do. Probationers (in focus group interviews) perceived that sharing of stories and ideas is vital and it makes learners be attentive and to acquire knowledge from story-telling. Full members (in focus group interviews) pointed out that old timers become teachers because of their experiences in the sodality. They also stated that attendance at these gatherings is essential as they entail activities for learning. Kim mentions that “profiles are important and help to give the community a sense of history and context” (2000, p. 98). This is a learning curve for SACWG members. Likewise, Wenger talks about learning as “belonging, and relates this to how learning changes who we are and creates identity, personal histories of becoming in the context” (1998, p. 78). As Wenger points out, “members learn from each other and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally” (1998, p. 80). It is clear therefore that the sharing of personal histories and of stories is the cornerstone of their learning among the group members.

### **(b) Tuesday and Thursday gatherings**

Members participate in all activities. Aspirants (in focus group interviews) mentioned that they help everybody regardless of religion. Probationers (in focus group interviews) stated that members create their identity by participating in all activities. Old timers (in focus group interviews) believed in engaging themselves in mutual praying. Learning involves a process of engagement in group activities. This aligns with Wenger when he perceives this as the modes of “belonging and engagement where membership indicates a commitment to the sphere” (1998, p. 99). Therefore members commit themselves to performing the tasks pertaining to the group to establish their belongingness and involvement.

### **(c) Monthly meetings**

Communication skills are enhanced. Aspirants, probationers and full members (in focus group interviews) stated that discussions in the form of group conversations are vital for communication among group members. Learning is perceived as meaning making. This aligns with Tennant when he concludes that “learning does not belong to individual persons, but to various conversations of which they are a part” (1997, p. 47). It is clear therefore that participation and interaction are fundamental in learning.

### **(d) Heritage Day celebrations**

Skills development takes place. Aspirants and full members (in focus group interviews) stated that experts teach members how to embark on acquiring different skills. Probationers (in focus group interviews) mentioned that collaboration in talent mapping is encouraged. This aligns with Wenger who says when there is “active engagement in the group, learners will have a desire to develop skills if the people they admire have the same skills” (1998, p. 99). It is clear therefore that this can encourage members to learn more skills.

## **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the SACWG as a CoP and has described how it relates to the church and its socio-cultural context. Importantly, the chapter has presented key learning places for SACWG members. It broadly defined these learning places as using informal and non-formal learning principles. In turn, these inform the nature of learning. This chapter has presented an argument that the SACWG is a CoP because it meets the three criteria of Wenger’s theory (1998): mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire. I then presented how learning within and among the group happened so as to show how the probationer moves from the periphery to being the full member at the centre. Finally,

in a direct fashion, I looked at the research questions as the themes of this study. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrated the schism between the church and the reality. Women are anticipated to engage in the wider community as Christians and that their Christianity to be visible in the community. There are social ills in the community which affect residents. Their interventions are also projected. The church building has become an 'island in the sea of harsh reality'. The findings revealed that there are congregants who reside in WIS, and none of the participants is residing in WIS thus a distance between the SACWG, the church and the WIS is evident. The conclusions are presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the dissertation. It provides the summary of key findings, conclusions and also provides the recommendations. The Case Study applied the qualitative approach, located in the interpretivist paradigm and used the concept of Communities of Practice as its theoretical framework. Seven participants were selected through a purposive sampling which was stratified. These seven represent not only the overall population, but also key subgroups of the population. The findings were presented in the previous chapter under the themes suggested by the research objectives. The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between what was learnt within the group and how what was learnt impacted on the SACWG members' lives. The following objectives were specified in order to accomplish the purpose of the study:

- To bring together the principles of SACWG as learnt within the group and the real world members live in.
- To apply what is learnt in the SACWG to the world members live in.

The findings are summarized in relation to these research objectives and or themes. Conclusions are dealt with in line with the problem statement. Recommendations based on the findings are dealt with next and then followed by the conclusion of the chapter. The next section discusses the summary of findings.

### **5.2 Summary of key findings**

The summary of the findings is presented in relation to the research objectives.

Three themes were derived from the data analysis. This section will summarize the key findings within each theme. The focus of my study was to understand the types of learning that took place in the SACWG. The next section summarises the findings which developed the first theme of the study.

#### ***5.2.1 To understand the nature and the process of learning that takes place in the SACWG***

In this section I discuss different types of learning that took place in the St Anne's Catholic Women's Group. As indicated in the previous chapter I presented four different events where

different types of learnings happen for the participants. Here below I summarise the nature of learning in these places.

#### ***5.2.1.1 The Annual retreats and conventions***

The SACWG members have a tendency to meet annually for these gatherings, usually at the Deanery and Diocese levels. The findings suggest that non-formal learning and informal learning are the strong motivational factors for SACWG learning since participation in non-formal learning is structured, organised and embedded in SACWG activities. On the other hand, in informal learning, learners embark on experiential learning where learning derives from daily experiences and or daily life activities (UNESCO, 2009). Werquin (2007) mentions that informal learning is an unplanned type of learning, a non-targeted learning in terms of objectives, time or support thus it just happens. This too, is what takes place in the SACWG.

#### ***5.2.1.2 Tuesday and Thursday gatherings***

One of the types of learning to emerge from the analysis of data was ‘learning done by the women on Tuesday and Thursday gatherings’. The participants from both the focus group and the individual interviews showed that they also learn from Tuesday and Thursday gatherings. I found that informal learning was a major perceived influence on the nature and process of the SACWG learning. Sources from both the focus group and the individual interviews revealed that women gather on Thursdays and Tuesdays for praying and giving support to one another, and members participate fully in the activities assigned for these days. Old timers become the teachers, they teach new comers the SACWG activities.

Learning is among and between members as they are free from church formalities. Kahu (2013) comments that learning is allied with engagements which is having multi-level of phenomena and procedures. The indications are therefore that participation is fundamental in these gatherings. There are responsibilities and activities to be carried out by members. According to Wenger *et al.*, “Communities of Practice help to create a sense of belonging, encourage a spirit of inquiry and instil confidence” (2002, p. 78) On this basis it may be inferred that members learn by doing and will gradually become experts and feel confident in their activities during the Tuesday and Thursday meetings.

#### ***5.2.1.3 Monthly Meetings***

The findings suggest that monthly meetings are a strong motivational factor for the SACWG learning. These are characterised by some level of formality as they are structured. I found

that the agenda was a major perceived influence on the smooth running of the monthly meetings. As Thandi (probationer) from the individual interviews points out, members have the standard agenda which contains flexibility for some unplanned matters. The agenda carries enough flexibility for some spontaneous interaction and raising of issues. Zanele (full member and a Chairperson), a source from the focus group interviews, has drawn attention to the fact that these meetings are designed in such a way that time is devoted to prayer, studying and discussing the Handbook and the Bible. It is clear therefore that facilitation, participation and learning take place in these meetings. Most significantly, Laura (full member and a facilitator), a source from the individual interviews, gave the rather impressive opinion that, “face to face meetings play an important role in the SACWG since they are conducted to strengthen the communication and relationships among the group members.” It must therefore be recognised that communication skills are enhanced by these meetings.

#### ***5.2.1.4 Heritage Day celebrations***

The findings suggest that Heritage Day celebrations are crucial for SACWG learning since they provide a way to promote a Christ-centred community of the SACWG members who are willing to share their talents based on the individual capabilities. Members learn from community expertise. I found that participation, facilitation and knowledge sharing are major perceived influences on these celebrations since this is hands-on learning. Zanele (full member and a Chairperson), a source from the individual interviews, reveals that there are workshops during these festivities which are conducted for the purpose of teaching members about skills development at Parish level. Skills are enhanced, such as craft work including making Zulu mats, necklaces, bangles, beads, lids of Zulu beer containers (izinkamba), shields as well as traditional food. With regard to this, Betty (aspirant), a source from the focus group interviews, states that these workshops become the platforms for members to demonstrate their talents and gifts. Aspirants, probationers and full members are all welcome to participate. Wenger mentions that “knowing is a matter of participating, students will have a desire to develop skills if the people they admire have the same skills” (1998, p. 79). Thus, it can be concluded that practice found in CoP is most fundamental where people create knowledge by participating in activities which enhance their skills. The next section focuses on the impacts of learning on women’s lives.

### ***5.2.2 To understand how learning impacts the SACWG women's lives***

In this section I discuss the impacts of the learning on the women's lives. The next section summarises the impacts of the SACWG learning on the lives of these women in these four places.

#### ***5.2.2.1 Annual retreats and conventions***

The findings suggest that participation in information sharing and in storytelling for knowledge construction is vital. In the individual interviews, Futhi (aspirant) said that it is important to avail themselves for these gatherings since members learn to be bold and confident in sharing their experiences. In the focus group interview, Lihle (probationer) rightly points out that members felt that they have gained formation. They are the believers. In the focus group interview, Zuzile (full member) spoke of how categorization of members according to real situations impacted on their lives. Marriage encounter experts support members who are in lugubrious situations. This enables members to involve themselves in problem sharing so as to ease their situations.

#### ***5.2.2.2 Tuesday and Thursday gatherings***

The findings suggest that women in Tuesday and Thursday gatherings grow spiritually. During the individual interviews, Thandi (probationer) revealed that almsgiving is fundamental in showing support and giving hope to the needy. Betty (aspirant), in the individual interviews, affirmed that praying for someone is a means of giving emotional/physical/spiritual support. Likewise, Laura (full member) during the focus group interviews, concluded that praying and helping the needy is crucial for SACWG members. The indications are therefore that learning is more of a practical nature in these gatherings. They participate in activities assigned for these days.

#### ***5.2.2.3 Monthly Meetings***

The participants showed a clear preference for monthly meetings. The data indicated that members engage themselves in dialogic conversation as a way of constructing knowledge. As Lihle (probationer) during the individual interviews, has indicated, exchanging of ideas takes place during these meetings. In the same way, Zuzile (full member) in the focus group interview, makes clear that members are now able to voice their concerns. However, Futhi (aspirant) in the individual interviews, states that they sometimes feel anxious and reserved while they are at peripheral level. Also, they feel grateful if their opinions are valued by other

members. Moreover, probationers during the focus group interview, indicated that participation in the form of discussions, attending to Gospel teachings, and learning new songs is vital. In addition, full members during the focus group interviews, said they believed that Bible verses and Handbook teachings assist members to gain transformation and endure Christianity. Thus, it can be concluded that participation in SACWG activities transforms members.

#### ***5.2.2.4 Heritage Day celebrations***

The findings suggest that Heritage celebrations are pivotal for equipping SACWG members with skills development to upgrade themselves economically and spiritually. The SACWG provides women an opportunity for social interaction, spiritual growth and support during preparations for Heritage celebrations. What I found was that members engaged themselves in craft innovations and crop farming, and they then sold products at a profit. Zanele (full member), during the focus group interviews, encouraged members to be self-reliant and innovative for their own benefit and the benefit of the sodality as well as the Parish. Moreover, Lihle (probationer) during the individual interviews, revealed that members are talented and gifted as well as empowered through their participation. Futhi (aspirant), in the focus group interviews, makes clear that skills development in the form of craft work, farming and so forth was stimulated. The evidence seems to be strong that women are empowered and encouraged to partake in skills development for their benefit and for the benefit of the sodality as well as for the benefit of the Parish. The next section discusses the perceptions of women in the SACWG regarding their learning experiences.

#### ***5.2.3 To identify the perceptions of women in the SACWG regarding their learning experiences***

In this section I discuss the perceptions of women on their learning in the group. Below I summarise the perceptions of the women in the SACWG regarding their learning experiences.

##### ***5.2.3.1 Annual retreat and convention***

What I found was that SACWG members meet on an annual basis at Deanery and Diocese levels. Members rely on collaborative learning. They attempt to learn something together. The aspirants and probationers, during the focus group interview, showed a clear preference for these gatherings since they capitalize on one another's resources and skills. Knowledge is created within the group where members usually interact by sharing experiences through story-

telling and the sharing of ideas. During the individual interview, Laura (full member and a facilitator) correctly argued that members do these activities interdependently. Thus, it can be concluded that members must work together to search for understanding, meaning and/or solutions.

#### ***5.2.3.2 Tuesday and Thursday gatherings***

The findings suggest that SACWG learning depends on mutual praying and almsgiving. During the individual interviews, aspirants had indicated that members pray and donate to the needy. In the same way, probationers and old timers in the focus group interviews, said they believed that participation is crucial in SACWG learning. Here, members participate in mutual praying and performing almsgiving where they donate to the needy regardless of religion. It is clear therefore that their learning is hands-on. Thus, they perform activities to their satisfaction. Laura (full member and a facilitator) in the individual interviews, stated that it is a pity that other SACWG members are too old, and are no longer attending these gatherings. It is clear that there may be information lost during these gatherings if the knowledge of the older members who cannot partake anymore is lost. .

#### ***5.2.3.3 Monthly meetings***

What I found was that during monthly meetings, SACWG members participate in discussions in the form of conversations pertaining to group matters. In the focus group interviews, Thandi (probationer) indicated that members share ideas. Likewise, Futhi (aspirant) during the individual interviews stated that members embark on discussions, thus enhancing their communication skills. As Chiu (2008, p. 114), comments, “these face-to-face conversations play an important role in SACWG since they are conducted to strengthen the communication and relationships among the group members.” It is clear therefore that these discussions are useful in providing a context for learning and development of members towards their potential.

#### ***5.2.3.4 Heritage Day celebrations***

The findings suggest that Heritage celebrations are a strong motivational factor for skills development which enhance members’ capabilities and talent mapping. In the focus group interviews, full members said they believed that members engage themselves in learning different skills, including partaking in music and/or Zulu dance. Correspondingly, probationers, in individual interviews, revealed that the SACWG members work collaboratively in skills development at Parish level and in the demonstration of items done

during Heritage Day celebrations. Aspirants in the focus group interview, perceived that experts teach members to use their hands in skills development for their own benefits. Thus, it can be concluded that members embark on active learning where they construct knowledge through applying both theory and practice. Members learn from and within the SACWG.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The study found learning of SACWG members takes place within and among members. This learning had impacts on members, the church and their families although limited impact of this learning on the church neighbours. Learning is of a non-formal and informal nature. The nature of learning is embedded in the group activities. Some SACWG members are too old to participate in the group's activities thus leaving a big gap of knowledge sharing among the members.

The study is distinctive because it contributes to the overall body of knowledge related to non-formal and informal adult learning in the context of church women's groups. The study revealed that there is a minimal inclusion of SACWG participation of members in the community issues, thus detecting a disjuncture between what is learned in the group and the realities of women in the world they live in.

This study recommends to the SACWG executive members and the coordinators of SACWG learning that they revisit their non-formal curriculum to match it with the social nature of learning. The SACWG members will benefit from the study because they will comprehend the gap that their learning is displaying. Their learning is embedded in their principles and their motto and yet they are not reaching the community as intended.

The nature and process of learning that takes place in the SACWG does so in the four areas previously identified. Firstly, the annual retreat and convention are planned at Diocese and Deanery levels to disseminate information to all SACWG members including those at Parish level. Both old timers and novices learn according to their membership stages from these annual meetings. Secondly, at the Tuesday and Thursday gatherings, learning is more hands-on. Members' participation in the group's activities helps them to become confident in activities they are doing which help them to feel a sense of belonging to the group. Thirdly, the monthly meetings enhance communication skills among members. During these meetings, members are given opportunity to voice their views and to challenge matters pertaining to the SACWG. They follow the standard meeting agenda which reinforces learning for both novices

and old timers. Fourthly, in Heritage celebrations members are able to share their talents and skills. Members share different talents by teaching other members who lack those skills. Both new comers and full members sometimes become teachers by teaching other members how to excel in certain skills. Members learn from and within the group. This learning is through participation, knowledge sharing and skills development.

In order to understand the impacts of SACWG learning on women's lives, this is possible through understanding this in the same four areas. For the annual retreat and convention, participation in information sharing and in story-telling is vital for knowledge construction. Categorization of members pertaining to their real situations assists members to be able to share their experiences. Sharing of stories and experiences empowers members to become knowledgeable on how to conquer any situation they may encounter in life. Secondly, the Tuesday and Thursday gatherings encourage women to practise almsgiving as the way of showing physical support and giving hope to the needy. Members also embark on praying as a way of showing emotional/spiritual support. Thirdly, in the monthly meetings, members engage themselves in dialogic conversations or debates to construct knowledge. Participation in the form of discussions pertaining to the Bible and Handbook teachings and learning new songs is pivotal for members. Fourthly, the Heritage celebrations empower members to accomplish skills development to enhance them economically and spiritually. Members learn social interaction, spiritual growth and support during preparations for Heritage celebrations. Skills such as craft innovations, crop farming, sewing, cooking, to mention a few, help members to embark on income-generating projects. They also become beneficiaries of these projects. Members also learn to be self-reliant and innovative.

Finally, there is an understanding of the perceptions of women in the SACWG regarding their learning experiences using once again the four areas. In annual retreat and convention the members meet annually at Deanery and Diocesan levels. They rely on collaborative learning. Members capitalize on one another's resources and skills. Members interact, share experiences through story-telling and sharing of ideas. Members work together for meaning making. In the Tuesday and Thursday gatherings, learning depends on mutual praying and almsgiving. Members pray and donate to the needy. Learning is hands-on. Very old members are unable to attend these gatherings, but nevertheless they are perceived as the assets of the group as they are knowledgeable and with vast experience. In the monthly meetings, discussions on matters pertaining to the group, as well as general sharing of ideas takes place. Communication and problem-solving skills are enriched. Heritage celebrations encourage members to engage in

skills development and talent mapping. Different skills are learnt, including music and Zulu dance. Experts teach other members who like the skill they are in possession of. Members embark on experiential learning. Participation in these gatherings sometimes is problematic for some members who are unemployed yet talented to pay for bus fares if the venue is too far from their Parishes.

The next section highlights the recommendations of the findings

## **5.4 Recommendations**

Recommendations have been arranged into two parts. The next section discusses recommendations related to the study.

### ***5.4.1 Recommendations emanating from the study***

There are four recommendations that emanate from this study. These are presented below.

- As SACWG members grow older, and there are certain challenges that affect them more, it is imperative to treat them with respect so as to retain them in the sodality. The society must be an enabling and empowering environment where individuals are free to exercise their potential and participate in the development of society.
- There must be mechanisms in place to ascertain that learning has taken place in SACWG and that new behaviours have been adopted to improve cohesiveness between members and the society. Members need to maintain their identities wherever they are. They need to avail themselves for matters affecting their communities.
- I detected a gap between the SACWG syllabus and the meaning-making of the group's principles as prescribed in the Handbook and the real world. Knowledgeable facilitators are required to be able to break-down the concepts as they appear in the Handbook. Facilitators must be interested in facilitation. They should have a background of teaching adult learners in a non-formal and/or informal setting and consider that their learning is self-directed. They should be able to disseminate information to adult learners. SACWG learning should mobilize and empower women for self-improvement and self-reliance. Each member should try to be well informed about the situation in her community and country. Each Parish should try

to discover what the needs of the community are and find ways to help the community to meet those needs.

- The data revealed that SACWG has women of all ages in its membership, but because so many women are going out to work, it does tend to have older members, unlike other sodalities in the church. It is almost exclusively for black women and is active in r many Dioceses. It aims at serving the church; serving the family and serving the community. Attempts to motivate young married women to join SACWG must be made in order for the learning to be more fruitful. The next section discusses recommendations for further research.

#### ***5.4.2 Recommendations for further research***

This study revealed opportunities for further studies within SACWG. I present three identified potential areas for study.

- Members are expected to bring together the principles of SACWG as learned within the group and their realities in the world they live in. A study looking at the effectiveness of SACWG learning in behaviour change of group members is recommended.
- Further study related to the monitoring of women's behaviours in the real world following SACWG learning is recommended. Without further research into SACWG learning, it will not be possible to monitor women's transformation. Such a study could enhance the understanding of the SACWG Executives at Diocese level who could begin to evaluate the impacts of SACWG learning on members in the real world.
- Another study that can be recommended is to assess the appropriateness of actions and products of SACWG learning. This topic links to the one above. SACWG learning should be monitored at community or societal level. There should be no disjuncture and schism between SACWG's principles and the real world the group lives in. The next section discusses the strengths and limitations of the study.

## 5.5 Strengths and Limitations

The findings of this study were restricted to SACWG members of St Kuhle Parish. SACWG is a gender-based sodality. The sodality comprises of married women only. It was a small-scale study and the findings were for one Parish only. The observations made were carried out prior to interviews. The study could not make generalisations about SACWG learning in all Parishes. During the research project, no comparable data was available.

I managed to get seven women who participated in the study. Initially members seemed intimidated by my presence as a researcher. This might have imposed a position of power. Eventually the participants became relaxed and interviews continued according to the plan. Some of the participants were reluctant to participate in the study, but did, eventually participate. Time management was difficult and interviews were finished late. I had to take participants to their homes since there were no taxis by the time we finished interviews.

The membership criteria was a barrier since it allows only married women who have permission to join the sodality from their spouses. The fact that only married women are eligible for membership of St Anne's sodality prevents other church members from joining the sodality. Another challenge was illiteracy. Some members were illiterate and found it difficult to embark on certain activities within the sodality. One participant mentioned that she initially felt anxious to join the SACWG, even though she was intrinsically motivated to become a member, because of being illiterate. She could read neither the Handbook nor the Bible. When asked to read, she made no utterances but only mumbled. Some of women in the church who wish to join the sodality and who are illiterate, are reluctant to join since they perceive illiteracy as a humiliation. Some of the members were too old to partake in SACWG activities. Some of the members are unemployed, pensioners and others domestic workers. They are sometimes unable to participate in SACWG activities due to the lack of money.

There was a lack of previous research studies to base my research on.

Access to participants during week-days was problematic. They were not easy to be found. They were available during week-ends, especially on Sundays as they usually came to attend Mass on Sundays. Church premises were always locked during the week.

The demographic information of participants revealed that some of participants are unemployed, others are pensioners, while others are domestic workers. They sometimes found it difficult to attend to these gathering since they have to pay for bus fares. They cannot even

buy materials for craft work, sewing, and crop farming. On this basis it may be inferred that this is a hindrance to their participation in many of the activities of SACWG members. The next section discusses the conclusions of the study.

Language fluency was also a limitation. One of the participants was a Sesotho language speaker. She could speak isiZulu a little bit. She could not express herself in English. She could hear isiZulu, however, but could not respond to questions deeply. On the other hand, the researcher could not express herself in Sesotho. Translation of interview schedules as well as of responses was time consuming.

The history of why St Anne is significant was revealed during the semi-structured interviews. I was able to scrutinize the value of building trust and personal development among the SACWG members. I managed to do data analysis using the theoretical lenses of Communities of Practice. Participants even mentioned that they did not know that they were learning. They said they enjoyed the experience they gained during interviews and observations. They also gained insights about SACWG learning.

## **5.6 Final Conclusion**

The study demonstrated insights into the SACWG learning experiences of the SACWG members in St Kuhle Parish (SKP). The significant issues centred around the responsibility of SACWG members be hands-on in community projects as they are with church projects. I, as the researcher was able to explore the relationship between what was learnt within the SACWG and how what was learnt impacted on SACWG members' lives. There is still a lot to be done by the group members in order to maintain the status quo of their learning. I was also interested to measure SACWG learning in the surrounding environment, that is, Wozanawe Informal Settlement. The findings revealed that there is no SACWG member who stays in WIS, thus indicating a distance between SACWG, the church and the WIS. SACWG's identity in the surrounding community is invisible. The findings of the study encouraged me to gain insight into the SACWG's principles through observation, experiences and opinions of members.

I urge members were urged not to turn a blind eye to community matters, but to intervene wherever they can for the benefit of the society they are living in. They can embark on small projects that can empower residents of Wozanawe Informal Settlement (WIS). They must shine in these communities to protect their identities and their belongingness. The stakeholders

such as the Department of Education (DoE), the Diocese, the Deanery and the SACWG sodality will benefit from the findings of this study.

## **5.7 Recommendations relating to the study**

The findings of the study encouraged me to gain insight into the SACWG's principles through observation, experiences and opinions of members. It can be better, should the Department of Education offers the Adult Basic education in the church context to help illiterate congregants to regain humanism and self-esteem. The provision of Christian Adult Education which includes the development of relationships amongst the adult members of the congregation can be commended.

SACWG members are a bit older, and there are certain challenges that affect them more, it is imperative to treat them with respect so as to retain them in the sodality. The society must be an enabling and empowering environment where individuals are free to exercise their potentials and participate in the development of society.

There must be mechanisms to be used in order to ascertain that learning has taken place in SACWG and that new behaviours have been adopted to improve cohesiveness between members and the society. Members need to maintain their identities wherever they are. They need to avail themselves in matters affecting their communities.

I detected a gap between the SACWG syllabus and the meaning-making of the group's principles as prescribed in the Handbook and the real world. Knowledgeable facilitators are required to be able to break-down the concepts as they appear in the Handbook. Facilitators must be interested in facilitation. They must have a background of teaching adult learners in a non-formal and/or informal and consider that their learning is self-directed. They should be able to disseminate information to adult learners. SACWG learning should mobilize and empower women for self-improvement and self-reliant. Each member should try to be well informed about the situation in her community and country. Each parish should try to discover what the needs of the community are and find ways to help the community to meet those needs.

The data revealed that SACWG has women of all ages in its membership, because so many women are going out to work, it does tend to have older members unlike other sodalities in the church. It is almost exclusively for black women and is active in over many Dioceses. They are aiming at serving the church; serving the family and serving the community. Attempts to

motivate young married women to join SACWG must be made in order for the learning to be more fruitful.

## **5.8 Recommendations for further research**

Further study to look at how SACWG members are engaging in the wider community as Christians can be recommended. This study will be picking up on how SACWG can fight social ills in the community. SACWG members are expected to play a crucial role in the community at large in addressing social ills interventions.

Another study that can be recommended is to assess the barriers in recruiting younger women to affiliate in the SACWG. Old timers sometimes find it difficult to participate in all activities of the group though they have enormous experience. Their experiences can be utilized to teach novices how to perform tasks assigned to the sodality.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Informed consent form (English and isiZulu versions)

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#### Informed Consent Form

This research is part of my Masters degree studies at the School of Education, university of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

This study aims to provide a better understanding of the learning that is taking place in the Catholic Church women's group – St Anne's Sodality in Pietermaritzburg region.

You are being asked to participate in research. In order to partake in this project, you must understand what the project entails as well as its possible risks and benefits. This will make it easier for you to make an informed decision. The purpose, procedures, benefits and risks will be outlined in this form. It also ensures how your personal information will be protected. On completion of reading this form and after all of your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will ascertain your participation in this study. You will be issued with a copy of this document for your record.

The purpose of this study is to understand the nature of learning in the women's group and how this learning impacts on their lives and it will further look at the perceptions of women about their learning experiences.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in the interviews that will be conducted. Individual interviews will be conducted at St Joan of Arc Parish after mass and will last for about an hour long. Additionally, you may be asked to participate in a one hour focus group interview of +twelve participants. Should you wish to participate in the interview portion of the study, the researcher will contact you via SMS or by telephone call. Furthermore, an observation of the class will be done on the same day of the interviews and will last for thirty minutes only. These interview sessions will be scheduled at a time that will be convenient for you. The entire interview exercise will require you to discuss the nature and process of learning that takes place in the women's group, its impacts on your lives as well as your perceptions about what you imagined your learning experience would be like. You will be audio recorded upon your permission in both the individual and focus group interviews. Notes will be taken during observation by the researcher and the assistant researcher.

No risks are anticipated in this study. Should it happen that you feel uncomfortable during discussions, you may stop the interview or choose not to discuss a topic. This study is significant to research of Catholic women's group learning. The study is beneficial for the women's group to be aware of what they perceive their learning experience would be like. The knowledge will be vital in the overall success of the women's group. This will assist facilitators and program coordinators when designing class activities in future.

You may keep a copy of this consent form. Your information will be kept confidential by keeping all audio recordings in the supervisor's office at UKZN for five years and thereafter will be shredded or incinerated. Themes derived from the interviews will be coded by the researcher. They will be overseen by the researcher's supervisor. As soon as the data has been coded and confirmed, the audio recordings will be burnt and the notes will be shredded. The data will be then sent to participants to verify if it has been represented accurately before publishing. The results of the study may be shared with the committee members of St Anne's women's group – St Joan of Arc Parish.

For more information, you can contact me, the student: Ntombenhle Ndlela at [NdlelaNC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:NdlelaNC@ukzn.ac.za) or 073 292 8954 or my supervisor, Mr Zamo Hlela at [HlelaZ@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HlelaZ@ukzn.ac.za) or 033-2605849 or Ms P. Ximba, UKZN Research Office at [HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za) or 031-2063587

By signing below, you are agreeing that:-

- You have read this form and have been given opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- You are aware of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.
- You understand that you will not be identified by name in the final report.
- You are aware that all records will be kept confidential.
- You are aware that you will not be paid for participating in the study.

Participant's full name/s: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Informed Consent Form (isiZulu version)**

Lolucwaningo luyingxenye yezifundo zami zeziqo zeMasters eSikoleni Sezemfundo, enyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natali (UKZN), eMgungundlovu.

Lolucwaningo luzokwenza ngcono ukuqonda ngemfundo eyenzeka eqenjini labesifazane, esontweni lamaKhatolika – Ama St Anna, esifundazweni saseMgungundlovu.

Uyacelwa ukuthi ubambe iqhaza kulolucwaningo. Uma uzobamba iqhaza kuleprojekti, kufanele uqondise okuqukethwe iprojekti nalokho okungaba nobungozi noma inzuzo yayo. Lokhu kuzokwenza kubelula ukuthi uthathe isinqumo esinzulu. Inhloso, izinqubo, nemivuzo kanye nobungozi kuzobalulwa kulelifomu. Lizobuyeliqinisekise ukuthi imininingwane yakho izovikeleka kanjani. Uma usuqedile ukulifunda lelifomu, nangemuva kokuba imibuzo yakho mayelana nocwaningo isiphenduliwe, uyocelwa ukuba ulisayine. Lokhu kobe kuqinisekisa ukubamba kwakho iqhaza kulolucwaningo. Uyonikezwa ikhophi yaleliphepha uzigcinele yona.

Inhloso yalolucwaningo ukuqondisa inqubo yokufunda kwaleliqembu labesifazane nokuthi lokufunda kunamthelela muni ezimpilweni zabo, luzophinde lubheke imibono nemiqondo yabesifazane mayelana nabakufundile.

Uma uvuma ukuzibandakanya kulolucwaningo, uzocelwa ungenele izinhlolo ezizokwenziwa. Izinhlolo zomuntu ngamunye zizokwenziwa esontweni iSt Joan of Arc emva kwemisa futhi zizoba isikhathi esingangehora ubude. Ungabuyi ucelwe ukuba ubambe iqhaza kwinhlolo engaba ihora elilodwa yeqeqebana leqembu elinamalunga ayishumi nambili noma ngaphansi. Uma ufisa ukubamba iqhaza kwingxenye yenhlolo yalolucwaningo, umcwaningi uzoxhumana nawe ngomqhafazo noma ngocingo. Ngaphezu kwalokho kuzobhekwa ukuthi kwenzekani eklasini ngesikhathi kufundwa ngosuku olufanayo nolwezinhlolo, lokhu kuzothatha imizuzu engamashumi amathathu kuphela. Lezithangami zezinhlolo zizohlelelwa isikhathi lesosizovumelana nawe. Sonke isithangami senhlolo sizodinga ukuthi udingide ubunjalo nenqubo yokufunda okwenzekay kuleliqembu labesifazane, imithelela yako ezimpilweni zenu nemibono nemiqondo ngenikufundile. Uzoqoshwa ngenkathi ukhuluma ngokwemvume yakho kuzozonke izinhlolo, ozobe uwedwa noma eyeqeqebana labesifazane. Kuyobhalwa phansi okutholalalile ngesikhathi kubhekwa iklasini ngumcwaningi nomsizi wakhe.

Abukho ubungozi okulindelekile kulolucwaningo. Uma kwenzeka uzizwa ungakhululekile ngesikhathi sokuxoxisana, ungayimisa inhlolo noma ukhethe ukungaxoxi ngesihloko lesi. Ucwano lubaluleke kakhulu eqenjini labesifazane njengoba bazokwazi ngemibono yabo ngabakufundisiwe ukuthi kunjani nokuthi kunayiphi imithelela ezimpilweni zabo. Ulwazi luzoba semqoka kakhulu empumelelweni yonke yeqembu labesifazane. Lokhu kuzosiza abafundisayo nabadidiyeli baloluhlelo ekuhleleni imisebenzi yaseklasini esikhathini esizayo.

Ungazigcinela ikhophi yalelifomu yokuvuma. Imininingwane yakho izogcinwa iyimfihlo, konke obekuqoshiwe kuzogcinwa ehovisi lalowo ongiphethe kulolucwaningo enyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natali iminyaka emihlanu emva kwalokho iyocucuzwa noma ishiswe. Iziqubulo ezizotholalala kwizinhlolo zizohlonzwa ngumcwaningi. Zizobhekelelwa ongiphethe kulolucwaningo. Masinyane emva kokuhlonzwa nokuqinisekisa kolwazi olutholakele, izinkulumo eziqoshiwe ziyoshiswa nokubhaliwe kuyocucuzwa. Ulwazi olutholalalile luyothunyelwa kwabakade bebambe iqhaza ocwaningeni ukuze balucubungisise ukuthi kubhalwe njengoba kunjalo yini ngaphambi kokushicilelwa. Imiphumela yocwaningo ingase yaziswe amalunga ekomithi leqembu labesifazane baka St Anna basesontweni iSt Joan of Arch.

Ukwazi kabanzi ngalokhu, ungxhumana nomfundi uNtombenhle Ndlela kanje: [NdlelaNC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:NdlelaNC@ukzn.ac.za) noma 073 292 8954; noma ongiphethe kulolucwaningo uMnumzane Zamo Hlela kanje: [HlelaZ@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HlelaZ@ukzn.ac.za) noma 033-2605849, noma uNkosazana P. Ximba, ehovisi locwaningo lwenyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natal kanje: [HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za) noma 031-2603587.

Ngokusayina lapha ngezansi, uzobe uvuma ukuthi:-

- Ulifundile ifomu, unikeziwe ithuba lokubuza imibuzo futhi iphenduliwe.
- Uyaqonda ngobungozi obungenzeka futhi buchaziwe wagculiseka.

- Uzikhethela ngokwakho ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo.
- Unelungelo lokuhoxa kulolucwaningo noma kunini ngaphandle kwenhlawulo
- Uyaqonda ukuthi angeke livezwe igama lakho embikweni wokugcina.
- Uyaqonda ukuthi yonke imininingwane izogcinwa iyimfihlo.
- Uyaqonda ukuthi angeke ukhokhelwe ngokubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo.

Amagama akho aphelele: \_\_\_\_\_

Isibongo: \_\_\_\_\_

Isiginesha: \_\_\_\_\_

Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2(a): Interview schedule (Learners)

982209387

### Introduction:

The interviewer will explain the purpose of the study with the participants, which is an exploration of learning for Catholic Church women's group – St Anne's Sodality in Pietermaritzburg Region / Umchwani uzochoza ngenjongo yocwango kwababambe iqhaza ocwangingeni, okuwukuphenya ngemfundiso yehlangano yabesifazane bamaKatholika – inhlangano kaSt Anna eMgungundlovu namaphethelo.

#### A. Biographical Data will be collected from each participant / Iminingwane izoqoqwa kobambe iqhaza ocwangingeni ngamunye

Institution/Isonto \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

Sodality/inhlangano: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of adult learners/inamba yabafundi abadala: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator's portfolio/izinga lofundisayo: \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. Evaluation of the lesson / Ukuhlola isifundo

1. Do learners understand the topic and its content? / Abafundi bayasiqonda isihloko nesikuqethe?
2. Does the lesson generate a dialogue? / Isifundo siyakudala yini ukuxoxisana?
3. Do adult learners demonstrate active participation? Abafundi abadala bayakhombisa ukuzibandakanya okunomdlandla?
  - By correlating previous knowledge with the current topic for discussion/ngokuxhumanisa ulwazi oludala nesihloko esisha esidingwayo
  - By voicing their viewpoints or critiquing/ngokuveza imibono yabo noma ukugxeka.
4. Did learners prepare themselves for the lesson? / Abafundi bazilungiselele ngalesifundo?
  - How is this indicated? / Kuvela kanjani lokhu?
  - How does this impact on learning? / Kunamthelalamuni lokhu ekufundeni?
  - Who dominates, in terms of age, new or old member? / Ubani okhuluma njalo, ngokweminyaka, ilunga Elisha noma elidala?
5. How do adult learners respond to the entire lesson? / Baphendula kanjani abafundi abadala esifundweni sonke?

#### C. State of the building / Isimo sesakhiwo

### Conclusion / Isigcino

I will ask the assistant observer if there is anything else she would like to add. I will ascertain that the participants understand the purpose of the study and what will happen with the findings / Ngizobuza umsizi wombuki uma kukhona afuna ukukunzelela. Ngizoqinisekila ukuthi ababambibeqhaza bayaqonda injongo yocwango nokuthi kuyokwenzekani ngemiphumela.

## Appendix 2(b): Interview Schedule (Facilitator)

982209387

### Introduction:

#### Section A:

Where the session observed taking place: .....

Time: ..... Date: .....

Number of participants present: ..... Who is the facilitator?.....

**Who are the participants** (aspirant, probationer or full member)?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

#### Section B: the nature and process of learning that takes place in Catholic women's group – St Anne's Sodality

Who is talking/active the most?

Aspirants	
Probationers	
Full members	
Facilitator	

My comments.....

.....  
.....  
.....

In your view what are the assumptions being made by the facilitator about:

(1) Nature of learning

.....  
.....

(2) What is knowledge?

.....  
.....

How similar/different is the role of aspirant, probationer or being full member?.....

.....

.....  
.....  
What is the role of full members in this session?.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Section C: the extent at which that learning impacts on members' lives.**

How much does what is being covered relate to each member life; family and community?

In your view is there an attempt being made to make connections between the lesson and member life; family and community. What shows/tell you that?

**Section D: perceptions of members of their learning experiences**

What do you think members learnt in the session? Why?

What do you think member think they learnt in the session?

## **Evaluation of the session**

### **A. Lesson Plan**

- Has the facilitator planned for the session being observed?

### **B. Competence**

- Is the facilitator familiar with the reading of the Bible?
- Is the facilitator capable of synthesizing the Bible verses with the women's group's themes for discussion?
- Does the facilitator engage adult learners actively in the session?
- Is collaborative learning supported?
- What is the medium of instruction? How does it enhance learner participation?
- How do adult learners respond to the lesson conducted?
- Which teaching approach is dominant: learner-centred or teacher-centred approach? Why?
- What kind of communication technique the session encourages – interpersonal or intrapersonal communication? Why?
- Is the learning material appropriate for the session? Why?
- Does the session encourage energy and engagement? Why?
- Has the facilitator utilized any material other than the prescribed one?

### **C. The learning environment**

- Is the learning place conducive for learning? Why?

### **Conclusion:**

I will ask the assistant observer if there is anything else he/she would like to add. I will ascertain that the participants understand the purpose of the study and what will happen with the findings.

## **Appendix 3: Focus group interview schedule**

982209387

### **Introduction:**

The interviewer will explain the purpose of the study with the participants, which is an exploration of learning for the SACWG members in Pietermaritzburg Region / Umvinyi uzochaza injongo yocwaningo kwabazimbandakanye nocwaningo, okungukuphenya ngemfundiso yeSACWG eMgungundlovu namaphethelo.

### **Section A: Reasons for joining SACWG / Izizathu zokujoyina iSACWG**

Tell me more about the following aspects: Motivation to join SACWG; achievement in life after joining SACWG and hiccups encountered from being a member of SACWG.

Ngitshele kabanzi ngalokhu okulandelayo: Ufuqufuqu lokujoyina iSACWG; okuzuzile empilweni ngokujoyina iSACWG nezingqinamba ohlangabezane nazo ngokuba ilunga leSACWG.

### **Section B: The nature and process of learning that takes place in Catholic women's group – St Anne's Sodality / Ubunjalo nenqubo yemfundiso eyenzeka enhlanganweni yabesifazane bamaKatholika – inhlango ka St Anna**

Tell me about anything you have learnt since you have joined SACWG / Ngitshele nganoma yini oyifundile selokhu wajoyina iSACWG.

Tell me about your learning between aspirants, probationers and full members and how learning happened? How did the learning between these stages of membership differ? / Ngitshele ngokufunda kwakho phakathi kwesiceli, umvinyi nelunga eligcwele nokuthi ukufunda kwenzeka kanjani? Kuhluka ngani ukufunda phakathi kwalamazinga obulunga?

Do full members learn anything? Who are the teachers? How did you realise that you had learnt something? Kukhona okufundwa amalunga agcwele? Obani abafundisayo? Wazi kanjani ukuthi kukhona okufundile?

### **Section C: The extent to which that learning impacts on members lives? / Ubungakho bomthelela obenziwa yilokhu kufunda ezimpilweni zamalunga**

How has being a member impacted on you; your family; your community? / Kubenamthelalamuni kuwe ukuba yilunga; emndenini wakho; emphakathini wakho?

How did being in each stage – aspirant, probationer or being full member impact your life (you; your family; your community)? Kubenamthelalamuni empilweni yakho ukuba sesigabeni ngasinye – isiceli, umvinyi noma ilunga eligcwele (kuwe; emndenini wakho; emphakathini wakho)?

Why is it important to you to be part of this Women's Group? / Kubaluleke ngani kuwena ukuba yingxeny yalenhlango yabesifazane?

**Section D: perceptions of members about their learning experiences / imibono yamalunga ngolwazi lwefundiso yabo**

Tell me your opinions about SACWG learning. What are the good and bad things that happened during the learning process? Please share your learning experiences with us.

Ngitshele imibono yakho ngemfundiso yeSACWG. Okuphi okuhle nokubi okwenzekile ngenkathi usafunda? Ngicela usicobelele ngolwazi lwefundo yakho.

**Conclusion / Isigcino**

I will ask the participants if there is anything else they would like to add. I will ascertain that the participants understand the purpose of the study and what will happen with the findings.

Ngizobuza ababambe iqhaza ocwaningeni uma kukhona okunye abangathanda ukukunzelela. Ngizoqinisekisa ukuthi ababambe iqhaza ocwaningeni bayaqonda injongo yalocwaningo nokuthi kuyokwenzekani ngemiphumela.

## Appendix 4: Interview schedule

982209387

### Introduction:

The interviewer will explain the purpose of the study with the participants, which is an exploration of learning for SACWG in Pietermaritzburg Region.

### Section A: Biographical Data will be collected from each participant

1. What is your age? .....years  
Uneminyaka emingaki? ..... iminyaka

2. Marital status/isimo somshado

Single/awushadile	1	Widow/widower – umfelokazi/umfelwa	4
Married/ushadile	2	Living with a partner/nihlala nomlingani wakho	5
Divorced/udivosile	3		

3. Which area are you coming from? Uvela kuyiphi indawo?

Urban formal (city, town) Ezindaweni ezigunyaziwe (edolobheni, edolobhaneni)	1
Urban informal (informal settlement, shacks) Ezindaweni ezingagunyaziwe (imijondolo, imikhukhu)	2
Peri-urban (location, township, eg. Umlazi) Eduze nedolobha (elokishini, isibonelo, Umlazi)	3
Rural (village/farm community) Emakhaya (edolobheni lasemakhaya, emphakathini)	4

4. Which standard of education are you having? Unaliphi izinga lemfundo?

Some primary school Okunokwenzeka Imfundo yamabanga aphansi	1
Primary school completed Imfundo yamabanga aphansi	2
Grade 8 / Ibanga lesishiyagalombili	3
Grade 9 / Ibanga lesishiyagalolungy	4
Grade 10 / Ibanga leshumi	5
Grade 11 / Ibanga leshumi nanye	6
Matric Certificate (grade 12) / Umatekuletsheni	7

5. Post school qualification/s / Isitifiketi/Izitifiketi ozizuze emva kokuqeda isikole

6. Are you ...

Employed / Uyasebenza	
Unemployed / Awusebenzi	
Pensioner /Usempeshenini	

7. Are you a/n ...

Aspirant / Isiceli	
Probationer / Umvivinywa	
Full member / Ilunga eligcwele	

### **Section B: Reasons for joining SACWG / Izizathu zokujoyina iSACWG**

Why are you a member of SACWG? / Kungani uyilunga leSACWG?

What are your highlights as a member? / Okuphi okusemqoka ngokuba ilunga?

What are the challenges of being a member of SACWG? / Yiziphi izingqinamba zokuba yilunga?

### **Section C: The nature and process of learning that takes place in Catholic women's group – St Anne's Sodality / Ubunjalo nenqubo yemfundo eyenzeka enhlanganweni yabesifazane bamaKatholika – umhlangano ka St Anna**

Do you consider yourself to have learnt anything since joining SACWG? / Uzibona kukhona okufundile selokhu wajoyina iSACWG?

What have you learned since joining SACWG? / Yini oyifundile selokhu ujoyine iSACWG?

How did you learn as an aspirant, probationer or being full member? What was different? Ufunde kanjani uyisiceli, ungumvinywa noma uyilunga eliphelele? Okuphi okwakwehlukile?

What did you learn as an aspirant and as a probationer? / Okuphi okufundile njengesiceli nomvinywa?

Is how you learning as an aspirant different to when you are a probationer? / Indlela ofunde ngayo useyisiceli ihlukile yini kunaleyo usungumvinywa?

Do full members learn anything? / Kukhona yini okufundwa ngamalunga agcwele?

Who are the teachers? / Obani abafundisayo?

How did you realise that you had learnt something? / Wazi kanjani ukuthi kukhona okufundile?

**Section D: The extent at which that learning impact on members lives. / Ubungako bomthelela walemfundiso ezimpilweni zamalunga.**

How has being a member impacted on you; your family; your community?

Kube namthelelamuni kuwe ukuba yilunga; emndenini; nasempakathini wakho?

How did being in each stage – aspirant, probationer or being full member impact your life (you; your family, your community)?

Kube namthelelamuni empilweni yakho ukuba sesigabeni ngasinye – isiceli, umvinywa noma ilunga eligcwele (wena, umndeni wakho, umphakathi wakho).

Why is it important to you to be part of this women’s group?

Kungani kubalulekile kuwena ukuba yingxenye yalenhlangano yabezifazane?

**Section E: perceptions of members about their learning experiences / imibono yamalunga ngobuchule bemfundiso yabo.**

What is your viewpoint regarding SACWG learning? / Uthini umbono wakho mayela nemfundiso yeSACWG?

What went well and did not go well during the learning process? / Okuphi okuhambe kahle nokungahambanga kahle ngesikhathi usafunda?

What learning experiences can you share? / Obuphi ubuchule ongacobelela abanye ngabo?

**Conclusion:**

I will ask the participants if there is anything else they would like to add. I will ascertain that the participants understand the purpose of the study and what will happen with the findings.

## Appendix 5(a): Recruitment letter for participant

982209387

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL



Dear Participant

### **Masters in Education (Adult Education) Research Project**

**Researcher:** Ntombenhle Ndlela – 073 292 8954

**Supervisor:** Mr Zamo Hlela – 033 260 5849

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba – 031 260 3587

I, **Ntombenhle Ndlela**, a Masters student in Education (Adult Education) at the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), would like to invite you to participate in a research project entitled: **An exploration of learning in women’s church group: A case study of a Catholic Church Women’s Group in Pietermaritzburg Region**. The aim of the study is to understand the nature of learning for the women’s group and how this learning impacts on their lives. It will also look at the perceptions of women about their learning experiences.

Through your participation, I will be able to have a better understanding of learning that is taking place in women’s group within the church context. Please note that your participation in this project is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. You may refuse to partake. You will not be paid for your participation in the project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained by the School of Education.

Should you have any questions pertaining to your participation in the study, you can contact me or my supervisor at the above-mentioned contact details.

Yours sincerely

Researcher’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5(b): Authorization letter by the Parish Priest



### St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church (KwaSigujana)

Tel: 033 345 5776  
Email: stjanoofarcsigujana@gmail.com

P.O. Box 8074  
3235 Cumberwood.  
-----  
37 Orhtmann Road  
Pietermaritzburg.

17<sup>th</sup> April, 2016.

Mrs Ntombenhle C. Ndlela  
29 Almond Road, Woodlands  
Pietermaritzburg 3201

*Dear Madam,*

**REF: AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT A STUDY RESEARCH  
AT ST JOAN OF ARC CATHOLIC PARISH**

According to your letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> April 2016, you seek permission to conduct a study research with the St Anne's Catholic women sodality in our Parish, a research project for your Masters Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal School of Education.

In this endeavor, you mention that you will conduct interviews and observe a class session with the members of the sodality.

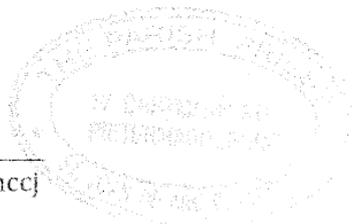
**I hereby grant authorization for you to carry out your study research in our parish with the condition that:**

1. The basic ethics taught by the Church are not transgressed
2. Reverence is accorded to structures and activities taking place in the Parish since it is a place of worship.

Wishing you all the best in your work!

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Fr. Paul Kambo, m.c.c.j.  
(The Parish Priest)



**Appendix 5(c): Authorization letter by the SACWG Chairperson**



St Joan of Arc Catholic Church  
37 Orhtmann Road  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201  
16.04.2016

Mrs Ntombenhle Caritus Ndlela  
29 Almond Road  
Woodlands  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

Dear Mrs Ndlela

**AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT USING ST ANNE'S WOMEN'S GROUP AT ST JOAN OF ARCH CATHOLIC CHURCH**

I, Mrs Beauty Bulelwa Xaki, the Chairperson of St Anne's Sodality, hereby grant you permission to conduct your research with our members.

We would be glad to co-operate with you on this task, we pray that the Lord gives you a positive outcome on your research project.

For further information, you can contact me at 079 581 8446 or Nomonde, the Parish Secretary, at 033 345 5776.

Yours sincerely

*B B Xaki*

Mrs Beauty Bulelwa Xaki

Chairperson of St Anne's Sodality



**SERVE THE FAMILY**

**SERVE THE CHURCH**

**SERVE THE COMMUNITY**

## Appendix 6: Ethical clearance from University of KwaZulu-Natal

13 September 2016

Mrs Ntombenhle C Ndlela 982209387

School of Education

Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Ndlela



**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI**

**YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

Protocol reference number: HSS/0861/016M

Project title: An exploration of learning in women's church group: A case study of a Catholic Church Women's Group in Pietermaritzburg Region.

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 13 June 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Handwritten signature of Dr Shamila Naidoo.

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

cc Supervisor: Ms Augustine ZN Hlela cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza cc School Administrator: Mrs B Bhengu-Mnguni, Mbalenhle Ngcobo, Philisiwe Ncayiyana, Tyzer Khumalo

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) | [spymanm@qkzn.ac.za](mailto:spymanm@qkzn.ac.za)  
[mgbqnp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mgbqnp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

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