The life of South Africa's rural womanhood: Agency of two decades and lessons for future research

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Outline

- Background and Objectives
- Data sources and Philosophical Bases
- Research Sites
- Participants voices
- Areas of Concern
- Concluding Remarks & Recommendations
Background and Objectives

- Derives from various research projects and life/practices
- Based on life/daily practices and women’s concerns
- Lessons and theoretical underpinnings discerned from empirical research & voices of research participants
- Influenced by Indigenous Knowledges, Reflexive Ubuntu and Feminist principles
- Present voices from below (perceptions & perspectives)
- Focus on strengths (individual & group agency)
- Table recommendations/thoughts to ponder
Research Design and Approach

Qualitative & Social Research

- Community research
- Identity research
- Critical personal understanding

Socio-cultural perspectives

Contextual awareness

Cultural Enquiry

Transformation (inclusive)
Marginalisation of IK & local knowledge weakens efforts
  - Nkrumah 1965; Conolly 2010; Ntobane-Matsotso 2012

Social reality principles
  - Searle (2008)

Auto-ethnographic transformative research
  - Peter Charles Taylor (2008)

Reflexive ubuntu & Standpoint theory

Feminist research practice and ideology
  - Gloria Bowles Renate Klein (2003); Ellis (2004 & 2006)

South African surveys and studies
Research Sites
Research Sites
Participants

Mama Zondi brought to tears by a situation

MaZondi Ngubane reflects on history/ life
Lived Experiences/ Voices

- Exposed to violence
  - Long walking distances
  - Forced marriages/ polygamy
  - Vulnerable to HIV
  - Rural women labour defined as economically inactive

- Supplements money (received from husband/ other) by
  - Thatching roofs for other members of the community
  - Selling cabbages, mealies, etc.
  - Domestic work & related (sewing, baking clubs, chicken farming)

- Main caregiver/ daily provider/ head of household
Lived Experiences/ Voices

- We used to do bead work, bake and sell produce but most end abruptly, all these projects and programmes come and get us excited only to end shortly.

- The greatest challenge here is that we don’t even have access to information about these programmes.

- I know a few people who had information about training for something but were told they have to go to East London for that, and not everyone knows how to get there, it is far and expensive.

- “Ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini” - the grave of a girl child is at her inlaws = the completeness of a woman is with her husband; marriage is taken as a sense of security.
Female Success
Gendered Statistics

- South Africa, poverty % is at 53.8
- Females are more impoverished than males, with poverty headcount of 58.6% as compared to 54.9% for males
  - EC, 70.6% (2nd poorest region)
  - KZN, 65% (4th poorest region)
  - Highest is LP (78.9%); lowest is GP (33%)
- MDGs report that
  - Systemically enforced divisions and institutionalised unequal development in inequality in all facets of South African life in sphere such as
    - education
    - health
    - employment
    - welfare
    - human settlement
    - access to infrastructure
### Literacy rates by sex and locality (age 25+), Census 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-urban</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: StatsSA, 2013
Monthly income by sex (15-64 years), QLFS 2011

Source: StatsSA, 2013
Primary source of income by sex, SABSSM 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Income</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal salary</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family contributions</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions/Grants</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Water collection by sex (10 years and older), TUS 2010

Source: StatsSA, 2013
Wood or dung collection, TUS 2010

Source: StatsSA, 2013
Areas of Concern

- Identity is crucial (nurture, reclaim & appreciate)
- Subjected to distortion, trivialization, violence & neglect
- Accorded low status
- Struggle for recognition
- Various forces of oppression
- Need to transform lived experiences
- Political transformation (systems & structures)
- Participation in the construction of new possibilities
Areas of Agency

- Participation in the construction of new possibilities
- Empowerment is crucial due to myriad of historical marginalisation
- Empowerment: internal and external
- Community-based and community-biased projects
- Community is a source of strength
- Equally individual and her/his identity is crucial
Concluding Remarks/ Recommendations

- Actively consulting & involving the community in and getting local support is very crucial - for ownership
- Basic education training/ second-chance programmes for adults who dropped out or never went to school
- Training in product design and marketing, and linkages to new markets (Entrepreneurial training)
- Linkages and exposure to new markets
- Provide post-training services such as access to credit or savings programmes, business development services
- Human rights awareness training (GBV, laws, rights)
- Training in basic health/ first aid
ENKOSI
SIYABONGA
DANKIE
THANK YOU