



Participatory Educational Research (PER)  
Vol.10(1), pp. 290-309, January 2023  
Available online at <http://www.perjournal.com>  
ISSN: 2148-6123  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17275/per.23.16.10.1>

Id: 1177201

## Reflections on the Value of Mixed Focus Groups with Adult Learner Research Participants: Exploring Gender Disparities and Gendered Relationships

Xoliswa Tawana

*Department of Adult, Community and Continuing Education, University of South Africa,  
Pretoria, South Africa  
ORCID: 0000-0003-2274-0264*

Norma R. A. Romm \*

*Department of Adult, Community and Continuing Education, University of South Africa,  
Pretoria, South Africa  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1722-9720*

---

### Article history

**Received:**  
05.08.2022

**Received in revised form:**  
01.10.2022

**Accepted:**  
28.12.2022

### Key words:

African feminist thinking;  
gendered relationships; gender  
inequalities; relational  
existence; transformative  
research

The purpose of this article is two-fold. Firstly, we consider whether the setting up of mixed-gender focus group sessions has the potential as a research process to contribute to transforming people's understandings of their gendered relationships. Secondly, we relate our discussion to the question of the mutability of stereotypical thinking in the context in question, taking into account the idea that cultures in different contexts can be seen as "in the making" through the way in which people together create meaning. We explain how the first author of the article organized focus groups which were mixed in terms of gender with the purpose that the adult learner participants could develop their perceptions as they related to each other around the topic of gender inequalities. The sessions were conducted in two adult learning Centers located in a rural and an urban area respectively – Xola and Zodwa – within the Cacadu District of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Two mixed focus groups took place in 2016 (one in each Center, with 19 females and 5 males altogether), and a follow up took place in 2018, to further discuss recommendations. In 2022, another set of focus group sessions was arranged in the same Centers, with 10 females and 6 males who were asked to participate and agreed. As part of a related discussion on gendered relationships, they were asked specific questions regarding how they understood the value of the mixed-gender conversations. Results from the various sets of groups suggest that focus groups can indeed help people to explore and rethink gender disparities and to think of ways forward in terms of enriched understandings. We recommend that mixed-gender focus group sessions should be regarded by researchers as a potential space to fruitfully set up a way for people to develop their sense of interdependence in their social relations.

---

\* Correspondency: [norma.romm@gmail.com](mailto:norma.romm@gmail.com)

## Introduction

This article explores the conduct of FG sessions undertaken in a rural and urban area in the Cacadu district of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. We highlight in what ways the research could be seen as enabling research participants to take part in revisiting their experiences of gender disparities in their social relations. As also suggested by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2015), FG sessions can be directed towards encouraging people to revisit their feelings, experiences, and views around the topic of investigation. FG research can then be judged in terms of its “transformative validity” in reshaping understandings (2015, p. 619). The use of FG sessions to try to advance more inclusive thinking in the face of various constraining social categorizations has been advanced by a number of authors (e.g., Chilisa, 2012, 2020; Dillard, 2008; Liamputting, 2008; Maldonado, Torres, & de Saez, 2013; Mertens, 2017; Nel, Romm, & Tlale, 2015; Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018; Romm, 2018; Woldegies, 2016). These authors extend the conventional/mainstream account of FGs as implying that they are to be valued as a research tool merely because they are, as Loots puts it, “low in cost and rich in data” (2009, p. 165) and therefore an economical way of gathering data. This mainstream account is linked to the definition of FG research as, in Gundumogula’s words (2020, p. 2), a means of collecting data on the selected topic with a “constructed and focused dialogue in a small group of participants”. Or, as Dishad and Latif summarize: “The element of synergy and relations between the group members play an important role in generating raw data in qualitative research” (2013, p. 197).

But what is not stressed in these conceptions of the advantages of FG research as a “data collection tool”, is how the research can purposely be set up as a forum that might serve to *strengthen people’s sense of their connectedness* in their social existence, as argued for by scholars advocating this intent in the use of research methodologies, such as Chilisa (2012, 2020), Kovach (2009), Romm (2015a, 2018), and Wilson (2008).

Some of the research literature refers to the way in which FG research can be used to fulfil a consciousness-raising function. For example, Kamberelis and Dimitriadis point out that Freire (1970, 1974) used FGs to bring about the emancipatory prospects of collaborative work (2005, p. 889). Liamputtong (2011) too refers to Freire in her discussion of the transformative potential of FG research, when she notes that:

Freire strongly encourages people to recognize that we ... are fundamentally responsible for the making and transformation of our situations and realities together. This, to me [her], is what the focus group methodology is all about and what it allows us to do. (2011, p. 23)

Chilisa and Ntseane for their part suggest that this kind of (transformative) intent is in keeping with an “African philosophical [and ethical] view” regarding the aim of research (including FG research.) They point to the researcher’s obligations as a “transformative healer”, engaging with communities and actively supporting peace, community development and healing (2010, p. 618). In terms of this ethical position concerning researcher responsibilities, FGs can become set up as an opportunity for people to develop listening with respect and care, and “thinking together” as part of the the group engagement (Chilisa & Ntseane 2010, p. 630). (See also Romm, 2018, p. 59.)

Chilisa and Ntseane suggest furthermore that in working with an African feminist theoretical stance (instead of a Western-liberal individual rights-based perspective), the pursuit is not to liberate women at the expense of men, but to encourage collaboration and recognition of the “interdependence between men and women” to improve relations (2010, p. 630). Notably, postcolonial feminism puts emphasis on how both women and men’s experiences are specific

to the social milieux in which they are situated; hence there is no universal feminist perspective to serve as a basis for revisiting gendered relationships (Kiguwa, 2019, p. 227). Central to such feminism is also the recognition that power is relational and not fixed. Collins argues that in African feminist thinking, the quest for women to become more empowered is sought in the context of “seeking connection, interactions and meetings that lead to social harmony” (2000, p. 261). Chilisa likewise stresses (2012, p. 276) that “African feminisms recognize men as partners in the struggle against gender oppression”. The desire is “not to separate women’s issues from the male struggle” – particularly in contexts of colonization where men have themselves experienced the impacts of colonial-based constraints on their agency. This is an important aspect of African feminism and its associated methodological practices.

In the mixed FGs that were set up in this research, the discussions were focused around factors experienced as reinforcing gender disparities and prospects for revisiting these as part of the discussion. This is in line with an epistemology where it is recognized that researchers initiating research are not free of some value position that guides the research (Collins, 2000; Dillard, 2000; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Romm, 2018, 2020). In this case, the research facilitator (Tawana) tried to encourage the participants to reflect together on gender disparities that render women marginalized relative to men in terms of patriarchal stereotypes, while encouraging the men to participate in terms of their experiences so that they might reconsider their interdependence with women. The hope was to ultimately strengthen what Indigenous scholars (those hailing from colonized areas across the globe) call relationality as a mode of being (cf. Adyanga 2019; Amaefula, 2021; Chilisa, Major & Khudu-Peterson; Chilisa 2020; Maqutu 2018; Quan-Baffour, Romm & McIntyre-Mills 2019; Romm, 2015a, 2017; Wirawan et al., 2022; Woldegies 2016).

Overall, the FG sessions held in 2016 and 2018 offer some pointers to how such interdependence was mooted by the males during the conversations. By 2022, we decided that the question of the value of mixed FGs should be posed explicitly to FG participants participating in the sessions. We realized that this may be an important contribution to methodological and theoretical discussions around how research can become transformative in the search for “better” gender relationships. Hence in 2022 a different set of participants (as the earlier ones had by now left the Centers) were asked specifically about how they perceived the value of mixed FGs. FGs were set up in the same Centers at this point, namely, Xola and Zodwa. Interestingly, many of the men made statements indicating the importance of holding such discussions, so that men do not feel “left out” and can also express their views on how gendered relationships can be improved. There were 6 males and 10 females altogether who participated in these focus groups. We discuss our methodology in detail below.

## **Methodology**

In this section we point to: The emergent research design; our sampling approach that was used; the gist of the purpose of the questions which guided the mixed FG discussions such that the data became generated; the data generation process; and some interpretation of the responses, also aided by member checking with participants as to what themes should be highlighted.

## **Research design**

The study on which this article is based was initially designed to identify/explore with selected participants from adult learning centers in the Cacadu district of the Eastern Cape the factors that they considered as impacting on the well-being of women (Tawana, 2019). The



research design was initiated in 2016. Originally, the research design began with several individual interviews with adult educators as a beginning point to get a general picture of how, if at all, gender mainstreaming was incorporated into the curriculum in the two selected Community Learning Centers. Then, a mixed FG (including both men and women) would take place in each of the centers. The intention was to organize cross-gender conversations; thus there was no plan for organizing FGs discussions with women only.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, no plan was made to prepare for a second set of FGs in (2018) with the same participants and indeed later a third set of FG sessions with further participants (2022). The need for these arose as the research progressed. Creswell (2003, 2013) and Poth (2018) refer to these evolving designs as “emergent”. In this article, we provide a description of how all the mixed FG discussions panned out. (We do not comment on the individual interviews or the homogenous FG sessions.)

### ***Sampling procedure, selection of participants, and the constitution of the volunteers in terms of gender, age, and employment status***

The research was set in the Cacadu district of the Eastern Cape. From this district two Community Centers, one in an urban and one a rural area, were sampled, based on the agreement of the managers of these centers that research could be undertaken at the centers. It was hoped that these centers may offer some insight relating to experiences from both urban and rural contexts in the district. Lincoln and Guba, in their seminal work on transferability (1985), indicate that as far as transferability to different contexts (those not sampled) is concerned, ultimately it is up to readers to decide how “applicable” they feel that the study is to other arenas of application. They argue that transferability is a *judgement on the part of readers/audiences of the research* (1985, p. 316). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007, p. 106) add that if one uses a lot of words or expressions of thoughts, feelings, or emotions from participants, this also adds high quality to the sampling process and can result in a “power analysis”, that is, a strong analysis which also allows readers to assess the extent of transferability of findings to other contexts with which they are familiar. In view of this, we offer a rich discussion of participant responses below, by offering range of responses from various participants, under our identified themes.

As far as the constitution of sample is concerned, the participants from the two selected Centers were approached since they were regarded as capable to give rich explanations of personal experiences. The adult learner participants were studying Grades 10, 11 and 12 (at different points in time during the research). The selection process for them was based on them coming forward to participate in the research. All the adult learners in each Center were asked during a meeting whether they were prepared to volunteer to participate in terms of the purpose of the research as communicated to them and in that case, they were requested to sign the consent documents. This process can be considered as what Kovach (2009, p. 126) refers to as *relational sampling*, given that selection of participants was not only in the hands of researchers choosing to locate appropriate participants. The participants also made the decision based on their view that participation seemed worthwhile to them. There were 35 adult learners in the Centers overall, 24 of whom took part in the FG conversations, with the vast majority being women.

---

<sup>1</sup> In both Centers, some of the women requested that homogenous (women-only) groups could also be set up – thus showing their active involvement in the development of the evolving research design. Their participation in defining the research design will be discussed in another article. Notably, in the women-only FG sessions, the women chose to discuss issues relating to their experience of the lower condition of women, their insufficient confidence, and the need for improved male and female relationships into the Learning Center curriculum.

The gender composition of the sample matched the composition of genders in the Learning Centers. There were far more females than males enrolled in the classes. In the Xola Center (rural), 13 learners agreed to participate in 2016, with 10 being females and three being males. In the Zodwa Center (urban), nine female adult learners and two males volunteered to participate. In 2018, two mixed FGs were formed from the original sample, with fifteen participants from the sessions of 2016 volunteering their continued participation in order to follow up and also to discuss more recommendations. In the 2022 sessions, a new set of volunteers agreed to participate in sessions, this time reflecting on the value of mixed-gender FGs: The Xola group consisted of seven participants (five females and two males) and the Zodwa group consisted of nine participants (five females and four males).

Considering the breakdown of the various participants in terms of age, as will be seen below, most of the participants were young adults. And considering their occupational status it is patent that work traditionally associated with women such as domestic work outside the home insofar as they worked outside their homes, were the preserve of women. Women who were gainfully employed thus continued the traditional role of doing domestic work, while the others focused on taking care of their own families.

We now turn to describe in more detail the breakdown in terms of age and occupational status in the various communities throughout the study period. In the Xola community in 2016, five participants were between 25-30 years old, four were between 31-35 and four were between 41-45. Regarding their occupational status, two of the males were farmers and one was not employed; while four of the women were employed as domestic workers and six were not employed (in outside work). In the Zodwa center four participants were between 31-35 years old, one was between 36-40 and seven were between 41-45. Regarding their employment, the two males were both employed – one as a driver and the other one as a gardener. Three of the females were employed as domestic workers and six were not employed. We can see from the occupational breakdown that the occupations traditionally (stereotypically) associated with men and women were manifest in the types of employment – and often the unemployment of women outside the home.

By 2018, fifteen participants from the 2016 FG sessions volunteered to continue participating in the study: five females and two males in Xola; and five females and three males in Zodwa. In Xola two from the age range of 25-30 participated, two were between 31-35 years old and three were between 40-45. In Zodwa two from the age range of 25-30 participated, three from the range 31-35 and two from the range 40-45. And in 2018 in Xola, four of the participants were employed (two males and two females again in traditional occupational statuses), while in Zodwa likewise two males were employed as farmers and three females were employed as domestic workers outside the home.

In 2022, with the new set of volunteers in Xola three were between 30-35 years old and four between 41-45. Two of the males were employed, one as a gardener and one as a taxi driver; and three females were employed as domestic workers. In Zodwa, two of the males were selling vegetables and sweets in the informal sector and four of the women were employed as domestic workers. All in all, again we can see that domestic work was the preserve of women (a traditional role assigned to women) and the men who were employed were also in traditionally defined jobs associated with men.

### ***The data generating process***

The FG conversations focused on how adult learners interpreted gender discrepancies in their daily lives, as well as how they felt about potential solutions to reduce gender disparities in the Cacadu district, and specifically in the Learning Centers. The FG sessions were designed to allow participants to generate deeper insights on the subject as they participated together in the conversations, in line with Romm's (2015b) depiction of how FGs might be supported in terms of an Indigenous epistemological view of knowledge as relational, where knowing is seen as generated in the interaction process.

As indicated above, the mixed focus group sessions' data production was done in stages (2016, 2018, and 2022). The duration of each FG session ranged from 1 hour 20-30 minutes. Participants were invited at the outset to answer the questions that were posed in IsiXhosa, the latter being their mother tongue. The language employed in qualitative interviews, according to Ndimande (2012), should be situated within the larger sociocultural context of the inquiry. As it turned out, the researcher (the first author of this article) was from the Eastern Cape and was versed in speaking and reading IsiXhosa.

As a result, we were able to communicate in the participants' native tongue, with occasional English interjections from both the researcher and the participants. The moderator, who spoke IsiXhosa, also recorded the meetings. This meant that a thorough comprehension of the discussions could be created when the facilitator and moderator compared transcripts and notes. After the first round of mixed FGs (2016), they were transcribed, and the moderator's notes were added. Participants were then asked to discuss the results' plausibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2003; Anney, 2014). The researcher specifically scheduled meetings with each group of participants to ascertain the major issues that they felt had emerged throughout the discussions and how they could be categorized or thematized. This "member checking" meeting served as a starting point for the subsequent mixed-gender FG sessions in 2018, during which suggestions for improving the Adult Learning Centers and relationships with the larger community were developed through discussion.

### ***The questions posed during the various FG discussions***

A set of leading questions were pre-planned and included in the FG field guide. However, the participants were advised that the questions were meant to guide rather than limit the debate. While conducting the study, the researcher was mindful of the idea that dialogue should flow as naturally as possible – as in "informal" conversation (Ndimande, 2012). To keep the discussion on track, the following questions were asked (in IsiXhosa) in the 2016 and 2018 sessions – with the focus on questions (1), (2) and (3) in 2016, and the focus on questions (4), (5), and (6) in 2018, although there was some overlap:

(1) What does the experience of gender differences mean to you as men and women? What do you mean when you refer to gender disparity? Have you ever experienced discrimination based on your gender? Please give illustrations.

(2) What are some of the main elements of your community's gender discrepancies between men and women? Do you believe that men and women receive equal treatment? If yes, how? If not, what aspect of life do you believe women are mostly falling short, and what are the main causes of these disparities?

(3) How do men and women's daily lives differ when they experience gender disparities? Please

give illustrations.

(4) What, in your opinion, can be done to lessen the disparities in opportunities that exist between men and women at Community Learning Centers?

(5) What, in your opinion, can be done to improve the relationships between men and women in your neighborhood?

(6) Are there any joint efforts that men and women may make to lessen gender inequities in Community Learning Centers or in their neighborhood? Please share your recommendations.

The final set of FGs (2022) was guided by additional questions (with some shortening of the earlier ones) as follows:

- As we know our relationships are often built on us imagining what “women” can and should do and what “men” can and should do. Do you think that FG sessions such as this one makes you think a little deeper about how we can organize our ways of living together?
- We also would like to know if you feel your participation in this gender-mixed focus group was worthwhile for you?
- What kind of re-education may be needed and through what channels in the society so that people are not socialized to think of women as inferior?
- Do you think there should be more forums such as the mixed FG we have held – that is should such forums be arranged by, say the Learning Centers or by some NGOs in the community? Kindly provide any recommendation you think may be helpful for other in this group to think about and for others in the community and other communities.

### ***Research ethics***

The researchers adhered to the ethical standards outlined by the University of South Africa's ethics research committee while conducting the study. Informed consent was organized; participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty; permission was obtained to record the conversations; and participants were assured that their identities would be kept anonymous in the researcher's reporting, among other "standard" procedures. In addition to all of this, though, we also took heed of Indigenous authors such as Chilisa (2009, 2020) and Mkabela (2005) who stress that the professional researcher's goals must consider the community's needs and interests. Additionally, research should encourage discussion of issues that participants as well as the researcher believe are important. The attendees actively engaged in the discussions and the majority agreed to participate further in the second round of mixed sessions (2018). This suggests a steadfast degree of interest in the conversations. As the participants from 2016 and 2018 had already departed the Centers in 2022, a different group of participants was approached in 2022; and we can infer from their comments that they felt enthusiastic about their involvement in the mixed FG sessions.

### ***Interpretation of participants' responses from the mixed FGs (2016)***

When studying the 2016 transcripts along with her field notes, the primary researcher noted that certain themes appeared frequently in both the rural and urban settings. She then



"checked" (via scheduled meetings) with the participants to see if they agreed with her way of interpreting the findings in each case. She proposed topics using plain language that the participants could relate to. While her identification of themes resonated to a large extent with the participants' understandings and their views of what to highlight, they also brought up some of their own ideas as to what was important to underscore (and name), namely, the low status of women and lack of confidence, which were identified in both the groups as important to stress.

For the purposes of this article, we have distilled the themes that were gathered, which are all related to important elements considered to contribute to gender gaps. Under each theme, we have noted several manifestations of the issue as well as some of the various "takes" that men and women have on the theme. The order in which we give the themes below demonstrates how, in themes v–vii, there was some rapprochement of the men and women's thoughts on lessening inequities.

### *Themes identified*

#### *i) Socialization process*

The socialization process (which some referred to as "programming," but some used the term "socialized") was one explanation put up primarily by female participants as a factor leading to inequalities in women's and men's access to resources, status, and well-being. They expressed this in a variety of ways, as follows (in English below):

*Our parents or guardians want to keep us secure as girls or young women, therefore our thoughts are shaped to act in a certain way. We accept it without ever trying to question it. (Female Participant)*

*Women in our district trail well behind men in the fields of science, engineering, and technology. There is still the perception that electrical engineering and civil engineering are fields best suited to men because they develop strong hands in female students. (Female Participant)*

When asked if they are willing to revise conventional viewpoints and in terms of perceived gender imbalances, women bemoaned:

*We barely ever question these realities; instead, we accept them for what they are because our culture demands that we behave in a certain way. (Female Participant)*

*Young women in our community are prepared for marriage and to be spouses, mothers, and providers of food (Female participant).*

*We are also raised to think that as women, we are inferior to males and that the home is where we belong. (Female participant)*

*I didn't grow up being expected to act like a boy or act like a girl. I was constantly told to act like a girl. (Female participant)*

#### *ii) Male domination*

The exercise of power relations was cited as one of the causes of gender differences in the Cacadu district. The males did not dispute the assertion made by the women that they are still mostly under the power of men. Both the women and the men indicated, in their own unique



ways, that males are supposed to lead and that women must ask their husbands for advice even while considering whether to visit the Community Learning Center. The translation of their expressed words is provided below:

*We were raised in households where it was not expected for women to speak at meetings or demonstrations. We feel men should be in charge because this concerns us. (Female participant)*

*Before arriving to this learning Center to register, I had to first ask my spouse. I would not go if my hubby did not agree to it. (Female participant)*

*Because educated women are loud and assert their superior knowledge, I do not want my wife to attend school. Additionally, educated women don't respect their husbands. (Male participant)*

One male adult learner stated:

*Wives should explain to their spouses why attending school is vital to them. (Male participant)*

The responses show that manifestations of power relations take on many different forms in the Cacadu district of the Eastern Cape. As in other patriarchal contexts around the world (see Lindsey, 2005, p. 53), it appears that the deeply ingrained disparities that limit women's access to education are a product of power relations that flow from a social and cultural structure that is predominately male.

According to Lindsey, "gender" can become "the cause, consequences, and mechanism of power relations, from the intimate domain of the household to the highest echelons of political decision-making" – depending on how gender is defined in various circumstances (2005, p. 53). It has been proposed that these dynamics hold true in numerous African situations (cf. Ngulube, 2018; Nweazu, 2014; Okoji & Ladeji, 2014). Other scholars, however, assert that in order to account for this, we must theorize an African feminist perspective because of the distinctiveness of African cultures and their emphasis on relationality, which have the potential to offer different ideas of the interdependence of men and women (e.g., Amaefula 2021; Adyanga 2019; Buswell & Corcoran-Nantes 2018; Matshidze 2013; Oyewumi 2002; Thakhathi, 201). We provide some evidence of this in point v) below and again in our interpretation of the follow-up FG sessions of 2018.

iii) *Status of women*

Several female participants in the conversation gave examples of how the (poor) status of women contributes to gender inequities in the Cacadu district:

*When your younger brother enrolls in initiation school, you are compelled to refer to him as "Buti" as the older sister (big brother). He can take part in the family's decision-making process thanks to his position. (Female participant)*

*A married lady is also expected to respect her husband's advice. Women are required to act in conformity with the man's opinions and let him handle conflicts. (Female Participant)*

*Men are expected to hold more authority over women in our society, and women are advised to keep silent or face domestic violence. (Female participant)*

One of the participants (a female) made a special reference to women's low employment status



by claiming that most of them are housewives and domestic workers.

*Women would continue to hold lesser positions such as housewives and domestic helpers if they are not given the authority to undertake diverse acts. (Female participant)*

*Women won't be inspired to successfully compete with males, and as a result, men will continue to rule. (Female participant)*

These responses indicate that the females felt restricted to tasks like home help, housekeeping, and house maid, and as a result withdraw or shy from participating in other activities.

iv) *A lack of confidence and respect for oneself*

The lack of self-confidence and self-respect of women was yet another issue brought up by the participants to explain how gender inequality affects the socioeconomic development of women. The following answers in this regard were given:

*Women with low status will experience a sense of inadequacy and begin to withdraw from society (Female participant)*

*Women will begin to believe they are failures in life and, as a result, stop accepting praise for everything they achieve. (Female participant)*

*Women will also not be able to participate in the social clubs of their communities (Male participant)*

v) *Dependency in their spouses or partners*

Some of the adult learners – both male and female – raised the topic of dependence on husbands or partners by pointing out that because women lack power in the home and have little (or low) resources and income, they remain impoverished and rely heavily on them for survival.

The following is how one of the males described this as a concern from his perspective:

*Men and women are both impacted by gender equality. Women who are poor will rely heavily on their partners or husbands to maintain their quality of life. (Male participant)*

Another male adult learner defended this point of view, saying that:

*If women are not economically empowered, men will be forced to shoulder the burden of child-rearing on their own and eventually pass away at a young age as a result. (Male Participant)*

These male participants' statements show that they had been paying attention to the women's expressions, while also seeking to draw attention to the pressures that emerge from the burdens that they themselves must bear (which we can theorize as emanating also from their marginalized position in post-apartheid society, because of historical legacies). For their part, women contributed remarks like:

*Education is crucial to us today since without it we cannot obtain appropriate employment. (Female participant)*

*We ultimately rely on our husbands or partners to keep us alive. (Female participant)*

*Both men and women need skills so that we can effectively advance to the development of our communities. (Female participant)*

vi) *Less decision-making power*

In relation to the issue of "less decision-making authority," it is apparent once more that the perception that women generally face discrimination in comparison to men and have less power to make decisions in a variety of spheres of life, was seen as detrimental to all parties involved – not just the women. This was demonstrated by phrases like:

*Women who lack self-confidence will be unable to speak up for their sexual and reproductive rights as well as their access to healthcare, which will lead to unintended pregnancies (Female participant)*

*Comparatively speaking to males, women lack the confidence to act on their emotional wellbeing. (Male participant)*

Regarding negative implications for involvement in the workplace, this was expressed as:

*Men won't want to put in a lot of effort since they know that even if they don't satisfy the qualifications, they will still be hired for better positions. (Male participant))*

*Women will not apply for jobs that are challenging. They will stick to jobs where they will feel at ease and relaxed. (Female participant)*

Considerations such as those raised above paved the way for women and men to introduce an additional "theme" concerning women's capabilities, as detailed below.

vii) *Competences of females must be acknowledged*

Various participants indicated that recognizing women's strengths could help to close the gender gap in the Cacadu district. These were some of the recommendations:

*For women to successfully compete with males and contribute to the economic growth of Cacadu District, their potential must be recognized (Male participant)*

*Our curriculum designers need to take both men's and women's top concerns into account. (Female participant)*

A male adult learner supported this view and said that:

*Skills development should be promoted in our community to encourage women start their own small businesses (Male participant)*

Here the male participant expressed more-or-less the same sentiment as raised by Madambi (2020), where she describes a case of how women's participation in economic life in terms of their capabilities and goals "benefited them, their family units, and country" (p. 12).

### ***Interpretation of participants' responses from the second set of mixed FGs (2018)***

The focus of follow-up FG sessions in 2018 was on the strategies that Community Learning Centers and the larger community may use to help reduce gender gaps in the Cacadu district. Both men and women offered fresh suggestions for reducing inequities during this round of FG talks, and both appeared to be more aware of how traditional gender stereotypes

might work against both men and women. Below, we list and categorize their suggested disparity-reduction tactics, which they provided as their recommendations.

i) *Gender familiarization*

Some responses that point to the need for “gender familiarization” to become part of the curriculum at the learning centers were as follows:

*Gender issues should be covered as a subject at community learning centers, and both men and women should have access to gender familiarization classes. (Male participant)*

*Our subjects do not include the issues of gender. (Female participant)*

When the participants were asked by the researcher to list the subjects they studied in Grade 12, these were summed up as:

*Life orientation as a subject in Our Community Learning Centers emphasizes on the importance of human rights and voting. (Female participant)*

*Career guidance or career choices are sometimes highlighted as topics. (Male participant)*

When asked whether the participants felt that they had been able to lessen the distinctions between men and women in their daily lives as a means of exercising rights since human rights-related topics were addressed in the Life Orientation class, one of the male participants responded as follows:

*It is difficult to fight against the issues we face since our communities have used women to get them to accept or agree with gender inequality. (Male participant)*

According to the above comments, some adult educators at Community Learning Centers do discuss human rights and democracy. Yet gender problems have not, however, been incorporated into the courses offered at these Centers. These results suggest the necessity of gender sensitization to gender issues to better prepare all adult learners to face their challenges.

ii) *Revisit traditional customs*

The following comments provided suggestions for how to confront what appear to be the community's stringent cultural attitudes about gender roles:

*Our community members must examine [restrictive] socio-cultural attitudes and develop solutions to eliminate gender differences in settings like weddings, funerals, and cultural rituals. (Male participant)*

*Both men and women must engage in discussions to point out how they can live agreeably or happily together. (Male participant)*

*To explore how they can coexist amicably or happily, both men and women must participate. (Male participant)*

Here, we can see some expressions on the part of men of the harmony principle, which Chilisa and Ntseane (2010, p. 618) advocate as a virtue that should be fostered. The women agreed with the notion, but some of them believed that in order for women to speak collectively (in solidarity) about their needs and frustrations, they still needed to be empowered:

*Women must join forces with other women and raise their issues with one voice so that their problems can be addressed. (Female participant)*

(This issue was one of the core themes of the women-only focus groups, which we are not focusing on in this article.)

iii) *Developing relationships between men and women*

The male participants offered some insights regarding how gender relations could be improved in the Cacadu district, as follows:

*Men and women must make decisions and communicate openly to each other (Male participant)*

*Men should see women as people who can support, encourage them to do certain things. (Male participant)*

According to the replies given above, these men believed that if males were made aware of the need to respect and treat women as equals, they could be willing to modify their attitudes. These reactions, of course, may have been impacted by the fact that there were fewer men than women in the FG discussions and that both the researcher and the moderator were female. However, the FGs were a venue where both men and women were expected to listen to each other's perspectives as part of the conversation (as promoted by the researcher); thus, in this context these thoughts came to the fore.

Considering the 2016 and 2018 sessions as a whole in terms of the themes discussed, we can suggest that "movements" were being made by the participants in their thinking about the issues, and in considering how they may be better able to relate in terms of less stereotypical gendered relationships. We have shown that these modes of thinking are in line with an African feminism theory that emphasizes looking forward to a better existence for everyone, that is, for the general well-being in the family and community, rather than focusing on a conflict between men and women. For example, Chilisa interprets the principle of African feminism as "emphasizing interrelationships, interconnectedness and interdependence between women, men and children and [indeed] between the living and the non-living [who are also regarded as part of the community]" (2012, p. 276).

Nevertheless, in regard to the dynamics of gender relations in traditional African communities, Amaefula alerts us that it would be difficult to assert that "sexism scarcely existed in most traditional African communities (prior to colonization)" and that Africans "neither identified men with superiority and women with inferiority" (2021, p. 294). His argument is that it is more accurate to maintain that the level of women's devaluation varied from society to society (2021, p. 294).

For the future, Amaefula states, it is crucial to avoid "projecting men as the major opponent of women," since this will make "African feminisms stay remote to many African men" (2020, p. 299). The ramifications of the feminist movement, including African feminism, for black women are multifaceted, according to Amaefula, who claims that we cannot ignore men's involvement in "instituting masculine hegemony" (2020, p. 299), but that better relations can be sought.

We have indicated that the principle of harmony, as highlighted by Chilisa and Ntseane (2010, p. 618) and Chilisa (2012, p. 276) was emerging in the sessions as a value to be nurtured, in the midst of the restricted historical norms that reinforce male hegemony. Many of the males



expressed the belief that if men were sensitized to respect and treat women as equals, they and other men could be socialized to change their attitudes.

Interestingly, in 2022, when Tawana probed the two different sets of participants about the potential value of mixed focus group sessions (and other conversational forums to speak about gendered relationships) the men showed enthusiasm for being invited as they felt that it provided an opportunity for them to express their perspectives on their experienced problems. This can also be placed in a context of apartheid and post-apartheid society in South Africa, where most African men continue to face challenges of poverty and related challenges. This again points to the postcolonial argument that we need to theorize around the specific contexts and experiences of the participants involved in the research, as indicated in our Introduction. In the next session, we point to the results of the 2022 FG sessions, where there were 16 participants altogether: The Xola group consisted of seven participants (five females and two males) and the Zodwa group had nine participants (five females and four males).

### **Interpretation of the 2022 FG sessions as pointing explicitly to the value of mixed FGs to revisit gendered relationships**

The interpretations in the preceding sections have focused on the themes that were coming to the fore in the 2016 and 2018 FG sessions, including the ways in which some rapprochements were being made between the women's and the men's positions on prospects for revisiting gendered relationships and lessening experienced inequities. The discussion in this section now relates directly to our consideration, based again on participants responses, of how mixed FG discussions, as well as other forums for mixed-gender conversations, might serve to render cultural patterns that seem rigidified less rigid insofar as people are brought together in a focused way to make gendered relations a topic of discussion. This relates to our indication in our Abstract that culture can be regarded as "in the making", a phrase used by Siry, Ali-Khan and Zuss (2011, p. 1). They point to the way in which people can participate in (re)making culture, including through research processes which are participative (p. 1).

As far as the revisiting of gendered relations is concerned, Marshall and Young indicate that working as professional researchers in conjunction with others we can regard gender constructions as being created within cultural and historical discursive practices, and hence as subject to reconsideration (2006, p. 67). Using this theoretical lens, enables us as researchers to consider how research can be used toward encouraging such reconsideration. Approaches to knowing, and the definition of "good methodologies", can be approached with this in mind (p. 67). They thus refer to the potential of "creative, world-changing methodologies" (p. 70). Chilisa (2012) favourably cites their argument. Chilisa adds that what is specific about African feminist thinking is that it seeks to generate a process of reflection and understanding on the part of both men and women, towards what can be termed a "healing" process (p. 277) in which compassion as a way of relating to others is centered.

Within the theoretical literature more generally on the way in which gender becomes socially constructed, various authors have indicated that the malleability of what are experienced as unnecessarily rigidified constructions depends on the social context (e.g., Ahlung, 2017; Musimenta, Adyanga & Sekiwu, 2020; UNFPA, 2012). The UNFPA report (2012) indicates from research undertaken on intervention strategies in various countries across the globe that attempts to engage men as well as women in moving towards a more gender equitable world are most effective when men and boys come to realize that they too can benefit from such changes (p. 11). The report also indicates that when creating any planned intervention efforts,

it is crucial to engage local partners who know best how to “reach the men and the boys in their own communities, workplaces, places of worship and schools .... in partnership and constant dialogue with women and girls” (p. 11). In the light hereof, we were interested to consider in this local context how the young adults at the sampled learning centers perceived the mixed-gender FG sessions that we arranged.

The themes below relate to the data that emerged in the 2022 sessions.. What came out of the discussions is how participants variously considered the importance of holding mixed-gender FG or similar mixed-gender discussion forums. They pointed to the potential advantages hereof, such as: offering a space for conversing around life challenges; enabling expression of opposition to restrictive stereotypes; and encouraging unity.

*i) Offer spaces for conversing around challenges*

In responding to the question on how FGs can be used as platforms for improving gender relationships and ways of living together, both men and women agreed that mixed FGs can constitute such a platform along with other mixed forums for discussion. Their views were iterated as follows.

*Men and women can take charge of their life by resolving issues in mixed focus groups. (Male participant)*

*Creating platforms where women and men can sit together, and talk can make men see women as their sisters. (Female participant) [It is worth noting here that the appellation of women as sisters is a common African expression.]*

*As men we feel left out to talk about our problems creating spaces where men can talk with other men or women can create ways in which we can talk about our challenges as well. (Male participant)*

*Create platforms where both males and females may not feel left out because there is too much focus on women’s issues and men are usually left out. (Male participant)*

When further asked to highlight some of their challenges, men expressed the following:

*The gender stereotypes imposed on us affect us later in life. We sometimes feel pressured to behave like real men. (Male participant)*

*We are not socialized to talk about our problems; so, platforms like this can make men to talk about their problems too. (Male participant)*

*When we are stressed, we do not have anyone to talk to and therefore end up drinking too much and engaging in violence out of desperation. (Male participant)*

Regarding the platforms that may be needed and through what channels in society so that people are not socialized to think of women as inferior, both men and women indicated that men should be engaged in conversations early on and that there should be a generational shift:

*More men must be involved in lasting efforts to create change. (Female participant)*

*As men we feel we must be sensitized so that we can act as partners in promoting gender equality. (Male participant)*



*If men can be engaged in platforms where they can talk about gender-based violence, they will come up with plans of terminating it. (Female participant)*

ii) *Challenge restrictive historic customs*

The following responses indicated options for challenging restrictive historic customs by reflecting anew on gender roles and finding (new) ways of living together:

*Community members must examine socio-cultural views and identify means of distancing themselves from traditional practices where there are gatherings, such as memorials, weddings, and ceremonies. (Male participant)*

*For their complaints to be heard, women must work together with males and speak up in unison. (Female participant)*

Participants furthermore indicated that stereotypes should not be imposed on boys, and concomitantly suggested that gender issues must also be incorporated in the curriculum (for school children and in Adult Learning Centers):

*Gender issues must be infused or incorporated in the curriculum from primary to higher education. (Female participant)*

*We need to re-socialize both boys and girls at a tender age to know and change their attitudes on gender equality. (Male participant)*

*Female empowerment should not only focus on women because men will be left out. (Female participant)*

iii) *Encouraging unity*

The 2022 FG discussions revealed how participants appreciated the value of FGs in terms of potentially encouraging unity, as can be detected in the following statements:

*Men should start to listen to women perspectives. (Female participant)*

*Where there are gatherings both men and women should challenge sexism and shout when they hear sexist language to reduce gender inequalities. (Female participant)*

*Men and women must be in forums where they will get a better understanding of each other, and men can be actively engaged to promote gender equality. (Female participant)*

*Young men must be made ready to be part of the group discussions in schools and in other forums. (Female participant)*

*Young men and young boys must be engaged in implementing of gender based alternative programmes in schools and in our communities. (Male participant)*

*Gender issues or gender inequalities must be part of topics in our churches. (Female participant)*

*Working together with women could improve our relationships. (Male participant)*

*Focus groups helped both men and women to reconcile and devise new ways of solving their challenges daily. (Female participant)*



### **Summary and further discussion**

Clearly, the participants in the 2022 sessions were able through their dialogues to conceive what they called “better relationships” and furthermore to offer visions as to why FG discussion can serve the end of reconciling views, also with an intent to solving challenges in their daily lives. They also offered recommendations for other forums for joint discussion in other venues such as schools and churches, that could be of help in mitigating gender disparities in their communities.

The considerations as proffered by these FG participants tally with the experiences of Maldonado, Torres, and de Saez, who facilitated mixed-gender FG discussions (FGDs) in an urban center in Venezuela (2013). They conclude that FGD became an effective tool since the FGD was able to “reconcile the experiences of men and women on questions of the relations between men and women in the community” (p. 451). The FGDs as they interpret their import, achieved the purpose of “promoting dialogue and exchange with community members” (p. 450). Woldegies (2016) reports on similar experiences when he set up FG discussions in Ethiopia, exploring prospects for women’s empowerment by concentrating on women’s economic empowerment in various rural communities. He involved the women in FG discussion with their family members as a route to enabling the family to participate in discussing their support of the women. Again, he suggests that the FG sessions were not merely *describing* relations, but helping to *strengthen* positive social relationships (2016, pp. 76-77).

### **Conclusion**

Within the methodological literature on FGs, contention remains as to the advantages and/or disadvantages of homogenous versus non-homogenous FG membership along chosen demographic characteristics such as age, gender, economic status, etc. (cf. Roller & Lavrakis, 2015, pp. 107-109). Roller and Lavrakis’s advice is that “the researcher must determine the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity that should be represented by the group participants ... as well as in their experiences and involvement with the subject matter” (2015, p. 107). Taking this advice, we suggest that the participants’ involvement with the subject matter – the question of mitigating gender disparities – could best be addressed by including both men and women, and by not attempting to force homogeneity along age and employment status either, as we wanted to enable them to discuss together their varied experiences. Furthermore, our theoretical and methodological starting point meant that we considered that gendered constructions can potentially be shifted and that both men and women need to be involved in this enterprise, as also emphasized by UNDP (2012). This does not mean that there is no space for homogenous FG discussion: indeed, some of the female participants requested a women-only group, which we did set up, but which is not part of this article. (See footnote 1.)

In this article we foregrounded and advocated the value of mixed-gender FG discussions as a way of providing a research forum for men and women to develop their understandings in concert with one another to explore options for mitigating gender disparities towards more balanced relationships. Based on the results, admittedly from a small sample (especially the sample of male volunteers) we suggested that these kinds of conversation should be encouraged during research processes and in other forums such as in Community Colleges, Higher Education, and even in other contexts. We have tried to put forward enough detail so that readers can consider the applicability of the way of arranging mixed-gender FG discussions and can also consider the relevance of our way of interpreting the “results” too in other contexts. In addition, we suggest that the value of mixed-gender focus groups and other forms of discussion



for the sake of generating open conversations about sensitive topics, may be explored in future by other researchers (as well as we ourselves).

### Declaration

- a) There was no conflict of interest in the carrying out of the research that led to the creation of this article
- b) The study was in accordance with the approval of the ethics committee of the University of South Africa for research using human subjects

### References

- Adyanga F. A. (2019). Ancient governance in Africa. In N. Wane (Ed.), *Gender, democracy and institutional development in Africa* (pp. 37-65). London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Ahlung, S. (2017). *Deconstructing gender: Interdisciplinary degree project*. Gothenburg: Göterborgs Universitet.
- Amaefula, R. C. (2021). African feminisms: paradigms, problems and prospects. *Feminism/s*, 37, 289-305.
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), 272-281.
- Buswell, C., & Corcoran-Nantes, Y. (2018). Precarious liaisons: Gender, moral authority and marriage in colonial Kenya. In J. J. McIntyre-Mills, N. R. A. Romm & Y. Corcoran-Nantes (Eds.), *Balancing Individualism and collectivism* (pp. 395-414). Cham: Springer.
- Chilisa, B. (2009.) Indigenous African-centered ethics: Contesting and complementing dominant models. In D. M. Mertens & P. E. Ginsberg (Eds.), *The handbook of social research ethics* (pp. 407-426). London: Sage.
- Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. London: Sage Publications.
- Chilisa, B. (2020.) *Indigenous research methodologies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Chilisa, B., Major, T. E., & Khudu-Petersen, K. (2017). Community engagement with a postcolonial, African-based relational paradigm. *Qualitative Research*, 17(3), 326-339.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Harper Collins.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Quantitative inquiry and research designs: Choosing among five approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Dillard, C. B. (2000). The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen: Examining an endarkened feminist epistemology in educational research and leadership. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(6), 661-681.
- Dillard, C. B. (2008). When the ground is black, the ground is fertile: Exploring endarkened feminist epistemology and healing methodologies in the spirit. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, & L.T. Smith, (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 277-292). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Dilshad, R. M., & Latif, M. I. (2013). Focus group interview as a tool for qualitative research: An analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 33(1), 191-198
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: The Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. (1974). *Education for critical consciousness*. London: Sheed and Ward Ltd.

- Gundumogula, M. (2020). Importance of FGs in qualitative research. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 8 (11), 299-302.
- Kamberelis, G., & Dimitriadis, G. (2005). Focus groups: Strategic articulations of pedagogy, politics, and inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 887–907). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kiguwa, P. (2019). Feminist approaches: An exploration of women’s gendered experiences. In S. Laher, A. Fynn, & S. Kramer (Eds.), *Transforming research methods in the social sciences: Case studies from South Africa* (pp. 220-235). Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Liamputtong, P. (2011). *Focus group methodology: Principles and practice*. London.
- Lindsey, L. L. (2005). *Gender roles: A sociological perspective*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). *The constructivist credo*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast press.
- Loots, A. (2009). Focus groups in research: Information gathering or real in-depth value? *Acta Academica*, 41(1), 164-182.
- Madambi, S. (2020). Breaking the shackles of gender stereotyping to create new norms: the case of Zimbabwean migrant women in Mthatha Town. *Gender Questions*, (1), 1-15.
- Maldonado, V. E. M., Torres, L. M. T., & de Sáez, M. J. N. (2013). Focus Group discussion as tool to study gender relations in urban community members. *Enfermería Global*, 29, 450-461.
- Maqutu, T. M. (2018). *African philosophy and Ubuntu: Concepts lost in translation*. Master’s dissertation in the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria.
- Marshall, M. D., & Young, J. C. (2006). Gender and methodology. In C. Skelton, B. Francis & I. Smulyan (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of gender and education* (pp. 63-78). London: Sage.
- Matshidze, P. E. (2013). *The role of Makhadzi in traditional leadership among the Venda*. PhD thesis in the Faculty of Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Zululand.
- Mkabela, Q. (2005). Using the Afrocentric method in researching Indigenous African culture. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(1), 178-189.
- Mertens, D. M. (2017). Transformative research: Personal and societal. *International Journal for Transformative Research*, 4(1), 18-24.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). Towards an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint theory: A methodological tool. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 28(78), 331–347.
- Musimenta, A., Adyanga, F. A., & Sekiwu, D. (2020). Gender and performance disparity in mathematics: A study of South Western Uganda. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8(4), 664-673.
- Ndimande, B. S. (2012). Decolonizing research in post-apartheid South Africa. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(3), 215–226.
- Nel, N. M., Romm, & Tlale, L. D. (2015). Reflections on focus group sessions regarding inclusive education: Reconsidering focus group research possibilities. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 42(1), 35-53.
- Ngulube, Z. (2018). *The influence of Traditional gender roles and Power relations on women and girls’ education and health in Northern Ghana*. B.A Thesis. University of Iceland School of Education.
- Nyumba, T., Wilson, K., Derrick, C., & Mukherjee, N. (2018) The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, 9(1), 20-32.

- Okoji, O. O., & Ladeji, O. O. (2014). Influence of adult literacy education on socio-economic empowerment of rural women in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Gender and Behaviour*, 12(1), 6016-6026.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). A call for qualitative power analyses. *Quality & Quantity*, 41(1), 105-121.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Frels, R. K. (2015). A framework for conducting critical dialectical pluralist focus group discussions using mixed research techniques. *Journal of Educational Issues*, 1(2), 159–177.
- Oyewumi, O. (2002). Conceptualizing gender. The Eurocentric foundations of feminist concepts and the challenge of Africa epistemologies. *Journal of Culture and African Women's Studies*, 2(1), 1–9.
- Poth, C. N. (2018). *Innovation in mixed methods research*. London: Sage.
- Quan-Baffour, K., Romm, N. R. A., & McIntyre-Mills, J. J. (2019). Ubuntu: A dialogue on connectedness, environmental protection and education. In J. McIntyre-Mills & N.R.A. Romm (Eds.), *Mixed methods and Cross-Disciplinary Research Towards Cultivating Eco-Systemic Living* (pp. 221-250). Cham (Switzerland): Springer.
- Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2015). *Applied qualitative research design: A total quality framework approach*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Romm, N. R. A. (2015a). Reviewing the transformative paradigm: A critical systemic and relational (Indigenous) lens. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 28(5), 411–427.
- Romm, N. R. A. (2015b). Conducting focus groups in terms of an appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing: Some examples from South Africa. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 16(1) (Art. 2).
- Romm, N. R. A. (2017). Researching Indigenous ways of knowing-and-being: Revitalizing relational quality of living. In P. Ngulube (Ed.), *Handbook of research on theoretical perspectives on indigenous knowledge systems in developing countries* (pp. 22–48). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Romm, N. R. A. (2018). *Responsible Research Practice*. Cham: Springer.
- Tawana, X. (2019). *A critical investigation of the role of Community Learning Centers in Mitigating gender disparities in the Cacadu District of the Eastern Cape*. Doctor of Education thesis, University of South Africa.
- Siry, C., Ali-Khan, C., & Zuss, M. (2011). Cultures in the making: An examination of the ethical and methodological implications of collaborative research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(2), Art 24.
- Thakhathi, A. (2017). Historical lessons for Africa's gender parity-based sustainable development. *Gender and Behaviour*, 15(2), 8643-8653.
- UNFPA Advocacy Brief (2012). *Engaging men, changing gender forms: Directions for gender-transformative action*. New York: United Nations Population Fund.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Halifax: Fernwood
- Wirawan, R., McIntyre-Mills, J.J., Makaulule, M., Lethole, P. V., Pitsoane, E., Achemfuor, A., & Romm (2022). Together we can grow: Resourcing the commons through pathways to wellbeing. *Systemic Practice and Action Research* (online first): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-022-09613-z>.
- Woldegies, B. D. (2016). Research highlighting options for gender empowerment in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. *South African Review of Sociology*, 47(1), 58–80.