

RESPONSIBILITY, PARTICIPATION, AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: WOMEN'S
CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMS IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

by

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light of this, I argue that development projects should focus on engendering genuine participatory empowerment on both the individual and collective levels in order to increase sustainability and development success in the long term.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building: it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated.

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970, p. 65

This thesis investigates empowerment as manifested in arts-and-crafts capacity building programs a meaningful form of positive, transformative development in South Africa. After decades of the functional disempowerment of the apartheid system in South Africa, post-1994 development programs require more than improvements to public services and education and the implementation of affirmative action policies. Instead, I argue that effective empowerment must form part of development programs so that historically disadvantaged people are able to take control of their lives and be active agents in improving their potential futures. I argue that individual and community forms of empowerment are necessary for individual transformation and community reconstruction in the long-term. I also postulate that arts-and-crafts programs that I researched offer examples for how empowerment can and should be included as vital elements in development programs in South Africa and beyond. Specifically, the creative design processes, skills transfer, and social consciousness workshops conducted by the arts-and-crafts programs operate as conduits by which to engage difficult personal topics, which in turn increase opportunities for hope and healing. This healing process is essential for individual and community empowerment and expands the potential for wider social transformation and successful long-term development.

Development Context

Looking back over the past 60 years of development activity worldwide, it is blatantly apparent that an overwhelming number of the initiatives to improve the human condition have failed. Examining human development between 1970 and 2005, there are some encouraging statistics overall, with global life expectancy increasing by nine years, average literacy up by 20 points, and income per capita \$3,800 higher on a population-weighted average. (Molina and Purser, 2010) However, when we explore the data within regions and countries, the unevenness of development trends is stark. Despite expanding income per capita globally, nearly a billion people, or a seventh of the world's population, remain hungry and undernourished in 2010. (FAO, 2010) The richest 1% of the world's population own an estimated 40% of global wealth, leaving the poorest 50% with a mere 1% of the world's wealth. (Frieden, 2007) This trend of inequality exists within underdeveloped regions such as Latin America, emerging economies including China, as well as in developed countries like the U.S.¹ One of the starkest examples of unequal wealth distribution in the world is South Africa—the location of my research—with a Gini index level of 57.8 as of 2007.²

Development cannot merely be about increasing GDP and economic growth; it must involve an improvement in the human condition for the majority of the population, even if some people progress and benefit more than others. Equitable development does not infer or require equal development in absolute terms but it does imply fair development that entails improved living conditions for the majority of the population. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that *everyone* has a right to the “free development of his personality.” (UDHR, Art. 22)

¹ Even in the world's largest economy, the top 20% of people have 85% of the wealth, according to Harvard professor Michael Norton, co-author of a forthcoming study on perceptions and misperceptions of wealth inequality. (National Public Radio, 2010)\

² The Gini coefficient is a measure of distribution inequality. A value of 0 represents absolute equality and a value of 1 corresponds with perfect inequality. (The Gini index is the coefficient multiplied by 100.) For reference purposes, the UNDP HDI of 2007 estimated the U.S. Gini index level at 45.

The declaration goes on to state:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (Art. 25.1)

While this echoes the basic human needs approach, the empowerment approach builds on this framework to offer an alternative perspective on how to redress the balance of power and its distribution in development in order to ensure improvement of living conditions based on a human rights framework.

Top-down paternalistic development fails to take local perspectives, contexts, power struggles, cultural norms, desires, technology, and needs into account. Prioritizing economic growth neglects the broad human and environmental aspects of development, meaning that the policy framework reproduces and reinforces the causes of economic poverty, insecurity, and barriers to basic freedoms. As Ferguson (1994) explains, empowerment aims to avoid the top-down framing of development discourse, which allows development actors to conceptualize “development problems” and create the “solutions” to perceived problems.

It is important to note here that the structures and institutions of development (as with society in general), while imposed and serving to reinforce hierarchies of domination, are not accepted without response from complex groups of marginalized populations. Galvan (2004, p. 209), among others, has shown that “subordinate populations simply do not accept the systems of production and domination...without some effort to protect their own interests.” That is, they push back against the institutions of society and development that threaten them, creating resistance identities and adapting their institutions in creative response. This response mechanism does not, however, excuse the destructive impact of development and concomitant “empowerment” projects that fail to achieve their basic stated goals of ‘improving the human condition’.

The empowerment approach places people firmly at the center of development and gained popular strength within the development establishment during the 1990s after a

decade of structural adjustment programs. The 1990 publication of the first *Human Development Report*, in addition to various human rights, population, social development, and people-focused conferences, saw the emergence of policy commitment—on paper at least—to empowerment approaches in development. Fifteen years after the 1995 *Beijing Platform for Action*, however, advocates for human rights and people-centered development remain dismayed with the lack of progress in women's development and the expansion of human development overall. (Desai, 2010) However, the call for empowerment has not been abandoned—far from it. Instead, there needs to be a rededication to the cause of human development and supporting local grassroots initiatives for self-development. The United Nations recently demonstrated a renewed commitment to support equality and empowerment issues for both men and women by creating UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. However, this needs to translate into genuine participatory approaches and support for local, empowering development. In attempting to overcome the marginalizing and underdeveloping force of global capitalism, particularly where women and other groups excluded from bases of power are concerned, empowerment frameworks offer an alternative to top-down economic perspectives.

Gender Inequality

In many countries, the legal system stipulates legal equality and universal suffrage for men and women. However, the reality of gender equality—or even gender equity—is absent. (Kristof, 2010) Local practices and priorities concerning gender relations often take precedence over national and international legal frameworks. Despite the fact that there is a Human Development Index (HDI), a Gender Development Index (GDI), a Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), gender disaggregated statistics, and at least lip service towards gender mainstreaming in 'development,' there are still vast and alarming gender disparities worldwide. (Kristof, 2010) Female primary enrolment rates have increased in all regions, with the exception of Latin America, where it was already comparatively high compared to other world areas. (Desai, 2010) However, while enrolment rates and completion rates have increased, opportunity costs, safety in schools, and gender-based

discrimination mean that gender-based disparities in secondary and tertiary education, adult illiteracy, and participation in the workforce are still formidable. (Desai, 2010)

These disparities remain despite global efforts at gender mainstreaming in development projects as well as a prioritization on interpreting local power in gendered terms. Tiessen (2007) has shown, however, that gender mainstreaming in international and national policies has not been adopted in practice. Indeed, she argues that while accepting that the terminology has been successfully integrated into development discourse, the requisite concomitant shifts in attitudes toward women and gender equality are markedly absent. This opinion is echoed in a 2005 UN Millennium Project task force report which explains that gender disparities have been acknowledged by the multiple actors which comprise the ‘development community,’ but it is “difficult to translate that knowledge into ‘development’ policy and practice . . . to bring about fundamental transformation in the distribution of power, opportunity, and outcomes for both women and men.” (Grown et. al., p. 26) Locating the gendered ‘development’ debate firmly in terms of power distribution is a positive sign, particularly in a UN publication. However, the challenge remains to move this discourse into the realms of government, private, and NGO policy and ensure that it directly influences *practice*.

Research Rationale and Methodology

Taking into consideration decades of global inequality and failed development practice, I decided to investigate local attempts to galvanize development in one of the most income-unequal countries in the world: South Africa. I do not claim to be an expert on South African history or development. Having completed school and university there over an eight-year period in the 1990s, I felt I had the pre-requisite cultural familiarity and sensitivity to attempt fieldwork on empowerment in the country. I conducted the research over an eight-week period between January and March 2010. I spent the entire eight weeks in Johannesburg completing an internship with Boitumelo Project which is based in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, and also has a satellite location in Jabavu, Soweto.

After a great deal of searching for empowerment programs run by non-profits as opposed to the public sector, a family friend introduced me to Boitumelo. Other projects I

considered included ActionAid, Project Literacy, and the education program run by the Open Society Foundation in Southern Africa. However, upon examination of the Boitumelo model, I realized that the project was engaged in a relatively unique concept of ‘healing through skills transfer.’ Research into the area of empowerment through arts and crafts projects revealed a gap in information on the topic. As a result, Boitumelo was chosen for its approach to using practical skills, creating a safe space, and using the arts to promote a concomitant individualistic and social conception of rights-based empowerment in a development context.

The definition of empowerment matters because an overly narrow definition can lead to limited instrumentalist perspectives on issues such as access to contraception and reproductive health without examining issues of power, participation, and the contexts in which decision making takes place around health issues. (Oxaal, 1997, p. 16) Boitumelo Project takes a broad view of empowerment, focusing specifically on non-economic definitions, while not excluding economic empowerment entirely.

For the first five weeks, I did no direct interviewing of project participants or management staff. Instead, I focused on my internship duties, spent time informally with project participants and management staff, who became comfortable with me and had numerous opportunities to ask questions about who I was and why I was there. This translated into participant observation techniques because it enabled me to absorb a wealth of information about attitudes towards the project, products, language, and power, as well as gaining an initial understanding of participants’ reasons for joining and staying with the project. These five weeks also gave me the opportunity to reformulate my methodology. I originally envisaged conducting focus groups but after spending time with the Boitumelo participants and observing their reticence about speaking forthrightly in group situations, I decided that small-group or individual interviews in addition to participant observation would be the most effective methods for answering to my research questions. I also realized that focus group methodologies could prove problematic because of the wide range of languages used at the project. Very few people are confident speaking out in groups in English because this is not their first language.

They are also used to interacting with each other in particular languages (mostly Sotho), which I do not speak. Interacting with me in English one on one, people were far more comfortable and confident because they were not being judged by their peers. As such, language was another factor that led me away from focus group methodologies and towards individual conversations, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.

This reformulation of methodologies also provided me the luxury to let go of preconceived notions about the way things should be done and expected outcomes. Instead, I tried to approach the research with a completely open mind, placing more control in the hands of project participants. In this way, I tried to create the space that enabled people to come and talk to me when they were ready, rather than being dictated by my research timetable. I also tried to facilitate people engaging in a way that was comfortable for them, be it one-on-one or in small groups. Wherever possible, I tried to follow the information rather than shaping and guiding it. To this end, I used participatory approaches, focusing on listening rather than guiding conversations. When it came to the semi-structured interviews, I had a set of interview questions (Appendices B-F), which also allowed for a free-form style of discussion where people were welcome to tell me other things they thought were important. This let participants take charge of the interview and research process to a certain extent, an important element considering a stranger came into their sphere and retains ultimate control of the reporting process.

In terms of selecting a project for research, I was originally interested in adult literacy programs. However, I wanted to look at programs run by local non-profit organizations as I anticipated these would be closer to grassroots initiatives for empowerment. In South Africa most adult literacy programs are run by or in close conjunction with the state, so project design and control are firmly located within local or even national government. As a result, I looked to other programs, particularly focusing on non-profit efforts at development that seemed to incorporate a local empowerment approach. Within South Africa, there are a number of arts-and-crafts-focused programs run by non-profit organizations and these seemed to most appropriately and accessibly suit the needs of my research. Many of the programs have empowerment as a key

objective, although as this thesis will show, organizations and programs treat empowerment in various ways, each using different definitions, processes, and assessments of empowerment outcomes.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

The working hypothesis for this thesis is that capacity-building initiatives targeting women have meaningful impacts in terms of personal confidence levels and successful participation in the formal and informal economy. Specific questions that I aimed to answer through my research included:

- Are the aims and expectations of the organizations running the programs in line with the needs and expectations of the people participating in them?
- To what extent do the capacity-building programs affect the participants' images of themselves, their roles in their households and social networks, and in the economy?
- Ultimately, do the capacity-building programs contribute positively to the empowerment of the participants, increasing their self-confidence as well as engagement in their communities and the informal and/or formal economy in South Africa?

Many institutions (e.g. CIDA) note that household decisions, household violence levels, and control over household money are key indicators of levels of empowerment. Most of the participants in this study are single parents and sole heads of their households so these indicators were not relevant for project participants. Instead, this research used a number of qualitative indicators of empowerment, including looking at changes in how people felt about themselves since joining the project; changes in how family and friends treated participants; changes in how community members treated them; and changes in perceived, rather than absolute, levels of economic security.

To gather information, I observed and interviewed Boitumelo Hillbrow and Soweto participants and management staff to understand the role of the program in empowering female (and male) program participants. Table 1 shows a simple overview of the interviews conducted by project. The bulk of the interviews were conducted with Boitumelo Project, the key case study in the research. However, to gain a broader

understanding of empowerment attitudes in the non-profit arts-and-crafts community, I tried to talk with participants in other projects. While both Tambani and HotBag have project directors in Johannesburg, crafters for each project are located elsewhere and I was unable to interview them in the same way as Boitumelo crafters. Despite this, interviews with management staff of these projects as well as informal interviews with non-project-related self-employed crafters in Johannesburg provided an invaluable insight into other projects and crafters and how they view empowerment issues.

Table 1: Simple Overview of Interviews Conducted by Project

Project Name	Location	Number of Interviews
Boitumelo Project	Hillbrow, Johannesburg	16 (4 males)
Boitumelo Project	Jabavu, Soweto	12
Tambani	Parkhurst, Johannesburg	1
HotBag	Hyde Park, Johannesburg	2
Self-employed crafters not members of a formal project	Johannesburg	3 (1 male)
<i>Gender Breakdown</i>		<i>29 females; 5 males</i>
Total		34

Limitations of the Methodology

There are a number of limitations inherent in this research, many of which are discussed in later chapters. However, it is important to address some of the limitations to the methodology at the outset.

I tried to ensure that interviewees had as much power and control over the conversation as possible so as to genuinely hear their issues and concerns. However, there is no denying that I went into the research and conversations with a personal agenda and may be guilty of interpreting interviewees' responses to fit into my own framework of types of empowerment. There is a great deal of subjectivity inherent in the

interpretation rubric and therefore a fair amount of room for interpretation error. In addition, the very existence of starting point questions meant that I was framed as the external power locus in the conversation, bringing overseas ‘knowledge,’ ‘credentials,’ and a perhaps a lack of commitment to and involvement in the local context. This structured and limited the interactions to an extent that cannot be measured and undoubtedly restricts the value of the findings.

This research attempts to analyze examples of empowerment in a very specific context: in local arts-and-crafts programs located in and around Johannesburg, South Africa. These arts-and-crafts programs are a widespread form of capacity-building programs currently operated by the non-profit sector in South Africa. As such, in this research I do not deal with complexity in terms of process and outcome of empowerment on national, regional, and international levels. Similarly, I do not discuss all forms of empowerment but have chosen to focus on instead on a select few that emerged clearly in the programs specifically analyzed. I do not seek to offer either definitions or models of empowerment applicable on a wider scale: I believe that empowerment is inherently locally located and therefore is unlikely to be easily transferable to other locations and contexts. Similarly, I do not discuss in any great detail the disempowering effects of national and international development policies, historical and current practices, social structures, or formal and informal institutions. I aim instead to examine how women and men living within these disempowering contexts are utilizing key programs to empower themselves in specific, limited, and yet vitally important ways. Finally, this research aims to shed more light on the empowerment processes and outcomes within local arts and crafts projects, a hitherto under-researched topic.

As a result of historical and current gender inequalities, research focusing on issues of empowerment in South Africa requires an analysis of the gender aspects of empowerment and how it targets women. Having said that, it is important to note the blatantly gendered element to a sewing program. The concept of sewing reinforces traditional gender roles rather than challenging them, with women presumably drawn to the project more than men. On the one hand, therefore, training women in sewing and

embroidery skills is reinforcing the existing discourse on women as stay-at-home and domesticated. This focus on the mother-housewife role of women by teaching handicrafts undermines wider empowerment initiatives. On the other hand, Boitumelo teaches leadership skills and self-worth and may even go some small way towards economic and socio-cultural empowerment.

Mehra (1997, p. 136) argues that in addition to representing small projects motivated by welfare not development, such projects offer “women temporary or part-time employment in traditionally feminine skills such as knitting and sewing that have limited markets” rather than realizing “that women are fundamental to the process of economic development.” While this argument has merit, I would note that not all of the projects examined in this study aim to economically empower women or have the immediate objective of raising their economic status. For projects that aim to economically improve the status of women, I agree with Mehra. However, the purpose of this study is to examine other forms of empowerment, taking the analysis out of the global economic framework and focusing it rather on a local human rights level.

In addition, it is important to note that there is a practical aspect to locating the research on arts and crafts projects. These projects attract more women because in current-day South Africa women tend to be more familiar and comfortable with the idea of sewing and embroidery than men, even if women have never engaged in those activities—and many participants had never sewed or embroidered before joining Boitumelo. Rather than simply reinforcing extant gender roles and encouraging female domesticity, it is possible to interpret this project as utilizing a familiar activity (sewing) to appeal to women, and men to a lesser extent. This familiar entry point makes the project approachable and provides a relatively easy foundation upon which to conduct social issues workshops and engage in creative healing and empowerment projects.

There is another practical element to locating the project in an embroidery context. Participants are able to take embroideries home to finish. This is important because the majority of participants are women who almost invariably have domestic duties that involve looking after children, cooking, cleaning, and housework. Sewing and

embroidery products can be completed in addition to these other duties, meaning that the project accesses participants that would not be able to engage if they were required to stay away from home for long periods of time. This does serve to reinforce traditional gender roles and facilitate the keeping of women in domestic contexts—a challenge that remains to be overcome within Boitumelo. However, as following chapters will show, the project does challenge personal and social notions of ability and power, using the arts aspect and workshop methodology to examine and challenge gender and social roles indirectly.

This research project is located in the Greater Johannesburg area, indicating a definite spatial bias. Physical and financial restraints prevented me from interviewing participants in the Northern Province projects of Tambani and Kaross. Instead, I was only able to talk to Project Directors in Johannesburg facilitating the sale of products to local and international markets. As such, the conclusions drawn concerning the empowerment impacts of each project are based mostly on observation and interviews with Johannesburg-based participants and project directors. Comparisons can be made with interviews conducted with Boitumelo's management staff but participant opinions are lacking—an obvious limitation to the comparative usefulness of the study.

Another key limitation to the study was my failure to interview people who have completed and moved on from Boitumelo Project. While I was able to gather a number of stories of people who had opened their own shops or started similar projects elsewhere, these anecdotes lack personal narrative and verification. Unfortunately, the transitory nature of participants' lives, particularly in Hillbrow, makes it difficult to stay in contact with them after they stop attending Boitumelo regularly. Ideally, future research in this area would endeavor to analyze the post-program experience of previous participants.

Plan of the Thesis

Having located the research in the wider development context and detailed specific gender inequality issues, this chapter discusses my research rationale and methodology, specific research hypothesis and questions, and offers some methodological limitations. Chapter Two discusses existing literature on empowerment,

examining definitions, links to mainstream development, NGOs, arts, and empowerment, and limitations of the empowerment framework. Chapter Three examines the South African development context and specificities of the research locations, as well as giving an overview of the Boitumelo programs and participants. Chapter Four discusses the results of participant observation conducted at Boitumelo and other projects, while Chapter Five interprets data garnered during semi-structured interviews with Boitumelo participants. Finally, Chapter Six locates the main findings of the research within the context of my research questions, commenting on wider implications for development projects in general. I also offer recommendations for Boitumelo's empowerment initiatives and studies in the area of empowerment and arts projects.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT, EMPOWERMENT, AND PARTICIPATION

[E]mpowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action.
Marilee Karl, *Women and Empowerment*, p.14

In this chapter, I present a broad overview of concepts of empowerment and participation within a development context. I examine empowerment as an alternative form of development, definitions of empowerment, adoption of ‘empowerment’ by the development industry, contradictions within empowerment, and empowerment research concerning NGOs and arts programs. This discussion seeks to identify what is already known about the extent that NGO-run capacity-building programs affect participants’ images of themselves and their roles within households, communities, and the economy.

Framing this research within the context of empowerment places it squarely in terms of what John Friedmann (1992, p. vi) termed “the emerging practice of an alternative development with its claims to inclusive democracy, appropriate economic growth, gender equality, and intergenerational equity.” In an attempt to move from top-down frameworks of imposed development models, empowerment places the emphasis on local people, local contexts, and local forms of power and change. This is not to say that there is no element of top-down facilitation and pressure involved, particularly when bilateral and multilateral aid agencies (e.g. the World Bank) as well as international NGOs adopt the development rhetoric of empowerment. However, the intention is to focus on “people as active subjects of their own history” (Friedmann, 1992, p. vi) and as participatory active voices in their own development.

While power is clearly the core concept within empowerment, I do not extensively examine detailed conceptualizations of power within the scope of this research. Suffice to say that this thesis adopts the idea that power in society is a variable sum and that empowerment of a previously powerless group does not necessarily entail negative effects or a decrease in power for the powerful. Comprehensive empowerment does, however, require challenging the structures of society that block widespread empowerment and development. In this case the powerful would undoubtedly be required to give up some of their power but rather than a simple reallocation and rebalancing as in a zero-sum conceptualization, I assume that the reformulation of societal structures leads to the redress of societal power imbalances.

When examining different types of empowerment, it is important to recognize at the outset that they are not mutually exclusive and instead tend to be mutually reinforcing. For example, economic forms of empowerment where people gain jobs and economic benefit link directly to individual feelings of self-confidence and personal empowerment. The act of being involved in the job market, presumably interacting with various individuals also contributes positively to social forms of empowerment. Similarly, increased personal empowerment enhances the ability to be engaged with society and increases the chances of both social and economic empowerment. Different forms of empowerment should be identified and understood not in isolation but rather as potentially and probably inter-related dynamics.

Alternative Development

As this thesis focuses on empowerment within a development context, it is important to first delimit a working definition of development. I adopt a human development approach, accepting Sen's idea that development should be "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy." (1999, p. 3) After six decades of failed development approaches, empowerment and its inherent participatory perspective offer a compelling alternative development paradigm.

The Global Recession (as Nicolas Kristof calls it) presents an opportunity to re-evaluate the global capital system and the role of development approaches therein. If our system is leading to more poverty with fewer social welfare nets within the so-called developed world—many European governments adopting austerity measures, for example—what is it doing to the ‘developing’ world? This question has been answered by academics such as Lindio-McGovern and Wallimann (2009, p. 1) who insist that “neoliberal globalization is not a neutral process, it is gendered, and has exacerbated domestic and global social inequalities.” They also claim that by re-evaluating globalization and the role of ‘development,’ it is possible to work towards social justice, countering current trends reinforcing global injustice.

While the term ‘empowerment’ has become somewhat of a buzzword, I argue that it has a great deal of validity and applicability. The approach accepts the political nature of development relationships, analyses local people’s situations from their own perspectives, and takes account of global and historical power inequalities. (Porter, 1999, p. 11) Empowerment represents the final stage in Moser’s five-stage conceptualization of policy approaches concerning women: welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency, and empowerment. The approach attempts to succeed where other development approaches have failed, by embracing participation. (Moser, 1989, pp. 1806-1817)

The bottom-up perspective endemic to empowerment approaches is in line with participatory forms of development, at least as far as ideals are concerned. In reality, development agencies and organizations often try to empower people, but if adhering to the original intention of the approach, people cannot be empowered from outside; they can only empower themselves. Agencies and organizations can facilitate empowerment, making the space, creating the conditions, removing the barriers, and encouraging empowerment efforts but empowerment must come from within to actually be empowering. Specific actions do not lead to empowerment; rather it is the context in which these actions and decisions are taken which facilitates and promotes empowerment. (Oxaal, 1997, p. 7)

Towards a Working Definition of Empowerment

Despite its long history, first on the fringes of development theory and now in its role as ‘mainstream darling’ of the development industry, empowerment remains poorly defined and only vaguely comprehended. This is partly because it is by necessity a contextually located process and outcome and can therefore only be understood in terms of specific contexts and in consultation with the people supposedly being empowered. Despite this ambiguity, empowerment as a concept has gained development currency in the past few decades as the focus has shifted to participatory approaches within the global development context. The language of empowerment, which emerged out of small-scale populist NGOs, has been appropriated by large mainstream organizations including the World Bank (Parpart, 2002, p. 41) To a certain extent this reflects the widespread understanding that participation and empowerment “are the essential building blocks for grassroots, people-oriented transformative development.” (Parpart, 2002, p. 44)

Empowerment is a process of change that focuses on expanding the range of choices that people can make. As such, it cannot be understood as a single dimensional formula for change, either as process or outcome. It must instead be understood in particular contexts taking into account the specific needs of the people intended to be empowered. (Kabeer, 1998) Empowerment and disempowerment are both processes and outcomes. Neither the processes nor outcomes are clear, unidirectional, or simple, instead involving immense complexity regarding power over resources and the power to make decisions. (Datta and Kornberg, 2002, pp. 2-4)

Moffat et. al. (1995, p. 234) provide what is probably the most comprehensive view of power, the central concept within empowerment. They note that power operates in four distinct ways:³

- **power-over:** involves an either/or controlling relationship of domination and subordination based on the notion that amounts of power are fixed and power exchanges

³ This is often referred to as “The Rowlands Framework” and has become popularly associated with Jo Rowlands. The framework was first outlined by Moffat et. al. and later quoted in an Oxfam gender training manual, among other places (Oxaal, 1997; Rowlands, 1997). Rowlands herself acknowledges the original reference. (Rowlands, 1997, p. 145)

thereby necessitate a zero-sum game. This form of power involves the creation of simple dualities, threats of violence, intimidation, and active and passive resistance.

- **power-within:** this involves spiritual strength based in self-acceptance, self-respect, self-esteem, self-awareness, consciousness raising, self-confidence, and assertiveness. Respect for self is extended to respect for and acceptance of others as equals, recognizing complexity and complementarity.
- **power-to:** is creative, productive, and enabling and considered *the essence of individual empowerment*. It involves capacity building, decision-making authority, leadership, the power to understand how things work, and problem-solving skills.
- **power-with:** this is a collective form of power where people feel empowered by organizing and uniting around a common purpose or understanding. It involves a sense of whole greater than the sum of individuals.

As Williams et. al. (1994, pp. 233-4) explain when examining this framework, *power-over* is the prevailing and most common conceptualization and yet is the most destructive and antithetical to development. They recommend other forms of power be explored within development in order to engender positive forms of empowerment. Similarly, they emphasize that “Men also benefit from the results of women’s empowerment with the chance to live in a more equitable society and explore new roles.” (Oxaal, 1997, p. iv) This framework, encouraging the shift from a hierarchical *power-over* conceptualization towards equitable individual *power-within* and *power-to* understandings of empowerment form the theoretical framework for my research. The concept of *power-with* is also important, particularly when understanding collective forms of empowerment, which my research also addresses. This study emphasizes *power-within* as a starting point for different forms of empowerment, specifically *power-with* and *power-to*. It assumes a movement from individual awakening and strength to the ability to associate productively with others and to engage in new activities and problem solve.

Empowerment can also be understood in a variety of different frameworks: individual and collective (Moser, 1989; Touwen, 1996); psychological, social, and

political (Friedmann; 1992); cognitive, psychological, political, and economic (Stromquist, 2002); economic, social, political, cultural; and in local, national, and global terms. (Parpart et. al., 2002) While Freire did not formally comment on empowerment, his ideas of “conscientization” are compatible with empowerment because this notion of a “deep awareness of one’s socio-political environment is really a precursor to the development of empowering skills and feelings.” (Stromquist, 2002, p. 22)

When assessing different forms of empowerment, many scholars focus on communal and collective empowerment to the neglect of individual empowerment. I admit that in order to effect long-term change and societal transformation, collective empowerment that forms the basis for challenging existing power structures must be pursued. However, as Reza explains, “In developing countries empowerment of necessity must first be about self...the empowerment of self is a necessary precursor of, but not an alternative to, the common good.” (2003, p. 458)

Numerous definitions of empowerment focus on the foundational concept of autonomy (Friedmann, 1992; Touwen, 1996). Friedmann notes that the empowerment approach “places the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance (but not autarchy), direct (participatory) democracy, and experiential social learning.” (1992, p. vii) Friedmann further refines his definition of empowerment, focusing on a triad of key areas—psychological, social, and political—which need to be accessed in order to overcome poverty and promote genuine empowerment. (1992, p. 116) This definition is complemented by Touwen’s discussions concerning individual and collective forms of empowerment because Friedmann’s psychological empowerment is individual while social and political empowerment are collective. Touwen explains that there are individual (individual and socio-economic) and collective (political and socio-cultural) forms of autonomy. She goes on to conceptualize empowerment as the process through which individuals and communities achieve autonomy, insisting on the building of self-reliance, self-confidence, organizations, and social alliances. (1996, pp. 18-20) Stern et. al. (2006, p. 242) echo this sentiment, arguing that empowerment involves both the growth of individual opportunity as well as

the removal of external constraints on seizing opportunity. In this thesis, I focus on both individual and collective forms of autonomy, accepting that they are inter-related and that individual-level impacts have wider ranging implications for collective levels.

Other definitions of empowerment include those stressing participation by people in decisions and processes shaping their lives; participating in the market economy; challenging inequality and oppression; the liberation of both men and women; and empowerment as bottom-up process which cannot be bestowed from the top-down. (Oxaal, 1997, p. iii)

Looking at the individual level, Stern et. al. define empowerment “as having the ability to shape one’s life.” (2006, p. 102) They offer a more engaged version of this, explaining that empowered people “can participate effectively in the economy and the society” (2006, p. 99) which, it will be seen later can bring a number of other contradictions. Nevertheless, this ability to engage is facilitated by individual abilities but is concomitantly restricted by external societal constraints (family, economy, society, cultural, political context) and internal individual constraints (preferences and self-perceptions). In order to enhance empowerment within this framework, therefore, projects, policies, and institutions may enhance individual abilities, reduce societal constraints, or remove individual constraints.

Having delineated the framework for understanding empowerment, it is necessary to investigate ways to recognize and evaluate empowerment on the ground. Kabeer sees empowerment as a positive change in the ability to *make choices*, echoing Sen’s capabilities framework. It is also important that that there are alternatives to choose from and that that they are perceived as real alternatives. (Kabeer, 2005; Rowlands, 1997) These choices manifest in terms of agency (process of choice), resources (medium of agency), and achievements (outcomes of agency). (2005, pp. 13-14) On a functional level, Kabeer specifies access to education, paid work, and political representation as important elements in facilitating empowerment, if undertaken in analytical, non-exploitative and broad-based contexts. Therefore, while there can be various paths and processes to empowerment, this perspective specifically identifies *choosing* from a range

of alternatives as empowerment process and outcome. Building on Kabeer's focus on *choice*, Steady prioritizes the mobilization of political, economic, education, human, social, and cultural resources as key to empowerment, both inside and outside of formal political processes. (2006, p. 18)

Evaluating empowerment is a key issue in development and still has not been resolved. This is in large part because empowerment manifests differently depending on the situation and individuals involved. Hashemi et. al. (1996) list a range of empowerment indicators—in addition to Kabeer's choice ability described above—including mobility, economic security, the ability to make small and large purchases, involvement in major household decisions, relative freedom from domination within the family, political and legal awareness, and involvement in political campaigning and protests. Regardless of whether the empowerment project targets people collectively or individually; psychologically, socially, politically, or economically; the empowerment projects should be designed and evaluated in close consultation with those participants to be empowered. However, empowerment has been appropriated by the World Bank, UN, and other development agencies and incorporated into top-down approaches rather than remaining closely connected with its participatory roots.

Appropriation by the Development Industry

From being an alternative approach to development, the empowerment approach has been widely adopted by mainstream development agencies, more to achieve immediate development objectives than to engender widespread social transformation. (Parpart, et. al, 2002, p. 3) *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* specifically state that

Women's empowerment and full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.

UN, 1996, para. 13

Working within this framework, many mainstream development organizations now prioritize empowerment as part of wider development approaches. In its *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Sourcebook* from 2002, the World Bank takes an institutional approach to empowerment, defining it as “the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.” (Deepa, 2002, p. vi) As such, the World Bank focuses on removing the institutional barriers to improving people’s well-being, individually or collectively. The four specific empowerment elements focused on by the Bank are access to information, inclusion/participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity. (pp. vi-vii) The arts and crafts projects investigated in this research take a somewhat different approach, focusing instead on inclusion and participation as a first step to accessing information, demanding accountability, and developing local capacity.

The United Nations (UN) focuses typically on women in its empowerment approaches, focusing on issues self-worth; the right to have and to determine choices; the right to have access to opportunities and resources; the right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and the ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. (POPIN, n.d. Section 4) The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights encourages a human rights approach to empowerment and participation, noting that “Empowerment requires the recognition that people are the prime agents of development and need to be part of the transformation of the structures and the overcoming of the obstacles that have created or contributed to poverty.” (UNDP, 2010, p. 17) The UN recognizes that empowerment initiatives often involve lip-service, with stakeholders being handpicked. Instead, the Commissioner for Human Rights says “decision makers should reach out to the poorest, remotest and most excluded groups, and actively invest in capacity-building and institutionalizing participation through existing democratic institutions.” (2010, p. 28)

While these are commendable recommendations, implementation and monitoring on the ground may not involve the requisite commitment or follow-through. As Chambers and Pettit (2004, p. 137) explain, “partnership, empowerment, ownership, participation, accountability and transparency – imply changes in power and relationships, but have not been matched in practice.” In fact, the appropriation of empowerment rhetoric may do more harm than good because the terms may now have less meaning. Along this line of reasoning, Chambers and Pettit (2004, p. 138) comment that they may be “little more than fashionable labels attached to the same underlying systems.” An Institute of Development Studies report of 2001 finds that rather than challenging previous ways of implementing development schemes, aid agencies instead continue to impose top-down hierarchical control with conditionalities while simultaneously preaching empowerment. (2001, p. 1) This criticism extends to non-profit agencies as well because all too often external development actors are unwilling or unable to abdicate authority over the poor and prefer to frame empowerment strategies on their own terms while unconsciously undervaluing local knowledge and capacities. (Parpart, 2002, p. 48) As Woost (1997, p. 249) phrases it, “we are still riding in a top-down vehicle of development whose wheels are greased with a vocabulary of bottom-up discourse.”

The generic concept of empowerment has become part of top-down, external, development processes, but effective and politically transformative empowerment requires grass roots, internal processes of developmental change. The discourse of empowerment is not enough to ensure appropriate change where it is required; official rhetoric and top-down funding do not challenge the hegemony of development discourse and as such we should not be misled by the discourse of empowerment. (Staudt, 2002) Instead, we must be vigilantly aware of the construction and production of development and empowerment discourse, avoiding what Staudt (2002, p. 109) refers to as “rebotling in the empowerment language.” Whether we are representatives of the powerful ‘developed’ world or the power-restricted ‘developing’ world, we must engage actively to facilitate and participate more in challenging existing power relations at local, national,

and global levels, using agency to embody and expand the discourse and actions of truly empowered development.

Participation as Key

Empowerment insists on the primacy of the target population's participation in any intervention affecting its welfare. It is the antithesis of paternalism.

Swift, 1984, p. xiv

A key element to empowerment being facilitated effectively on the ground is participation. Touwen's (1996, p. 171) research on urban and rural woman in Zambia in the 1990s noted that participation can change NGOs from "the bringers of good fortune...to NGOs as catalysts for self-development." Participation is one of a number of areas being investigated in this researched, to discover whether Boitumelo Project functions as a catalyst for self-development.

Participation may imply either individual or collective agency. Discourse on women's studies assumes that there is 'solidarity of women' but this ignores the myriad social, economic, political, individual positions of women and that each of them has different needs and interests and ways of trying to meet both. As such, participation should be assumed always to involve a collective endeavor but should include individualized iterations as needed by specific situations. The act of participation is also important in that it moves people from being passive objects to subjects active in the managing of development within their communities.

Building from this, participation in the form of resistance against inequitable power structures may lead to empowerment regardless of how the resistance is framed and labeled. Social change is a slow but incremental process and activists should not be impatient. Despite decades-long calls for domestic work to be 'counted,' for example (see Waring, 1988), it still is not, leading many academics and activists alike to conclude that "the shifts in policy frameworks are not happening...the disconnect continues." (Rai, 2008, p. 177) Rather than becoming disheartened, however, Rai (2008) and Steady

(2006) argue for struggles to open up new spaces where people can think ‘other-wise,’ arguing that action and reaction to development-underdevelopment and democratization-authoritarianism is in itself empowering. (Rai, 2008; Steady, 2006) Touwen (1996, p.205) comes to the same conclusion, using the concept of reflexive monitoring to support her convictions that people reflect on their environments and are therefore capable of being agents of change, which in turn leads to a form of empowerment greater than the restrictions imposed by power relations and social structures. (1996, p. 205)

Having argued that agency, autonomy, and self-reflexive action are possible within restrictive hegemonies of power and social relations, I note that this is a difficult process and that the boundaries imposed by discourse still exist. In fact, rather than being empowering, many ‘development’ projects have the opposite effect, as will be discussed below.

Contradictions within Empowerment Theories and Practices

In the developing world there is no such thing as an unemployed woman.
Queen Rania (Quoted in *The Jordan Times*, 23 September, 2010)

It is important to note that while the concept of empowerment represents a welcome progression from state-led top-down development approaches, it has limitations and encompasses widespread complexities that are often overlooked. Large development organizations and scholars alike may tout the benefits of empowerment, recommending it almost to the level of panacea of development challenges, but there are myriad potential disadvantages to the approach that must be addressed. When paired with entry into the global market, empowerment becomes a tool for exposing a previously isolated population to the exploitative, unequal, neo-liberal mechanisms of the international economy, particularly when women are paid lower wages than their male counterparts for the same skill sets and performance levels. Pearson (2007, p. 202) argues that these issues will not be resolved until we “challenge the assumption that women can become empowered solely by selling their labour or their products for money.”

In women-focused micro-credit schemes, empowerment frameworks often lead to an increased economic burden on women without a concomitant decrease in domestic and gendered duties or a change in household bargaining power over how to spend the increased income. Parmar (2003, p. 471) explains that even much-celebrated ‘women’s empowerment programs’ such as the Grameen Bank’s micro-finance schemes “reinforce and entrench existing social hierarchies and relationships of exploitation” rather than challenging the patriarchal social systems that present real structural barriers to lasting transformation. Lairup-Fonderson (2002) discusses how micro-enterprise projects actually empower the market economy instead of the women involved. The projects force women to adhere to meetings, rules, disciplines, timetables, and development norms. She also comments that women in these micro-credit programs rarely graduate from loans or move to more profitable businesses and that much of the impact remains only marginal in household, market, and/or political realms. (2002, pp. 185-6) Discussing the same issue, Zaman (1999, p. 169) goes so far as to say that the socio-economic gains achieved by garment workers in Bangladesh were undercut by “exploitation including lower wages, gender discrimination, harassment, job insecurity, and hazardous work environments.” Kabeer (1998) notes that micro-credit programs in Bangladesh had positive impacts on a range of levels, including personal, familial, and relationships with the rest of the community. All of the changes, however, were directly linked to and interpreted in terms of economic income, to the neglect of studies concerning changes in self-worth and community value irrespective of financial resource access. Similarly, issues concerning increased ability to identify choices and alternate strategies for dealing with inequality in daily life are not addressed by micro-enterprise and myriad other empowerment projects. This research aims to address this gap. While numerous studies have shown that micro-credit programs (Kabbeer, 1998; Zaman, 1999; Lairup-Fonderson, 2002) lead to various forms of direct and indirect empowerment, mainly related to increases in economic income and the management of this income, I am interested in find out if there are non-economic aspects worth investigating. In particular, I am interested to discover if the non-economic aspects of direct and indirect empowerment engender increases in personal

self-confidence, social engagement, and successful community transformation. In short, I would like to find out if the programs lead to transformative personal and community healing.

As with many third sector programs aimed at improving lives in lieu of the public sector, these activities can often lead to the state neglecting its efforts to provide services, as women are able to use extra income to pay more for private health care and other services. Lairap-Fonderson (2002, pp. 184-5) addresses this, noting that economic empowerment has led to people “taking responsibility for social welfare services abdicated by governments under structural adjustment programs” and allowing the governments to ignore their political responsibility to vulnerable populations. Steady (2006, p. 9) reiterates this argument, insisting that NGO involvement in empowerment, gender, and development reduces requirements for governments to be accountable. These forms of empowerment worsen the situation of women who have increased power to participate in the exploitative and unequal system but not enough to challenge and transform it. This in itself, it could be argued, is a function of incomplete empowerment, where there are individual and even collective economic forms of empowerment but this has not been translated into wider and stronger forms of political empowerment that would allow previously marginalized populations to challenge the status quo. As Touwen (1996, p. 20) explains, “Empowerment should bring people...more of a say in the direction of development.” However, in reality this means this changing the current power structures concerning development decisions, which is unlikely to be a simple process.

Braun (2005) has shown that ‘development’ projects have gendered social impacts that reproduce and reinforce gendered social interests and established hierarchies, particularly concerning control of and access to natural resources and geographical domains. Other scholars go so far as to perceive the ‘empowerment agenda’ as “a project which secretes an insidious form of power, subjugating and subjectifying its objects in the process of fabricating them as ‘subjects.’” (Kelsall and Mercer, 2003, p. 295) As such, Steady (2006, p. 19) is a proponent of alternative development which opposes the idea of

integrating women into the exploitative global political economy. Instead, alternative development argues for mobilizing women to challenge social structures; strengthening women's skills, education, and training; and promoting women's rights and access to resources such as land, facilities, and services. (Steady, 2006, p. 19) Boitumelo Project, while not outwardly promoting a direct challenge and transformation of social structures, encourages critical thinking concerning social norms, focuses on strengthening women's skills and capacities, and promotes women's access to facilities, services, and networks. On a different note, even the most successful empowerment programs and attempts to encourage increased autonomy face inherent barriers in the daily realities that can undercut wider initiatives. For example, often pursuit of daily interests (e.g. making ends meet) undercut broader goals to transform societal structures. People regularly make power trade-offs for immediate convenience, which is tantamount to accepting the extant unequal power relations in order to achieve short-term gains, while sacrificing long term achievements. Friedmann (1992, p. viii), for example, explores how social, political, and economic forces on local, regional, and global levels act to constrain local action and local empowerment by creating barriers to sustainable and transformative local empowerment and development.

Similarly, focusing entirely on autonomy and agency in empowerment efforts is often insufficient because there are numerous socio-political structures which frame and limit the efficacy of individual agency. As such, women's empowerment in particular, poses no threat to the status quo while reducing the burden on men and governments; simultaneously keeping women fundamentally dependent while benefiting from their extra labor. (Lairup-Fonderson, 2002, p. 185)

Another contradiction inherent in the notion of empowerment is the idea that people can be empowered by outside actors. (Parmar, 2003; Kelsall and Mercer, 2003) For change to be long-term and sustainable it must be driven by local people in search of their own ends by their own means. Despite claims by development organizations and contemporary development discourse to the contrary, empowerment manifested as *external* actors 'installing' *internal* desires and capacities for individual and community

autonomy is unlikely to succeed in effecting desirable change in the long-term. (Kelsall and Mercer, 2003, p. 293)

Empowerment studies and efforts also need to remember that program participants often form both a subordinate category—of people who have historically lacked access to formal education and societal structures of power—and a diverse group of individuals. The impact of empowerment programs will therefore reflect their historical position within the subordinate group as well as individual reactions as a result of personal historical experiences. Finally, when evaluating empowerment programs, it is important to focus on the perspectives of the intended beneficiaries of the programs. (Kabeer, 1998)

NGOs and Empowerment

A key area of research of importance for this thesis is that of capacity-building programs being run for adults outside of the realm of the formal education sector. Stromquist has noted the importance of these forms of programs for empowerment. It is with adult women outside of formal education that empowerment at present reaches its highest forms. Not only are adults more capable of reflective thought—typically derived from family, work and other everyday experiences—but they can also acquire new knowledge in less restrictive and more creative settings.

Stromquist, 2002, p. 26

Following from the above quotation, Stromquist explains that perhaps even more than the specific skills being transferred, these programs are important because they provide alternative spaces in which to access short-term, systematic learning opportunities. In addition, workshops offered are often directly relevant to participants and facilitate empowerment: gender subordination, reproductive health, domestic violence, gender and legislation, gender and politics, and others. Gains in self-confidence (psychological empowerment) arise not from the specific skills being learned but rather from the creation of a space in which people can discuss problems with others, exchange viewpoints, create bonds and trust, and formulate constructive and empowering strategies for dealing with issues. One basic skill that participants develop, for example, is the

ability to speak in public—developing confidence when sharing their ideas and opinions. Stromquist (2002, p. 26) notes that these spaces also provide the basis for informal learning through mobilization, organization, role modeling, community participation, and testing one’s leadership. As such, these non-threatening physical and social spaces facilitate individual and collective empowerment and lay the foundation for future initiatives in political empowerment.

Salo (2010, p. 43) notes that some skills are offered at many NGOs, including computer skills and arts and crafts. However, few of these include tracking systems to establish whether counseling and training offered to the women have assisted them in becoming independent—and therefore empowered—in the long term. So-called empowerment projects must be evaluated in terms of outcomes and with close objective reference to the project participants and their needs rather than referring overwhelmingly to development actors and whether their own agency goals are being met.

Empowerment and the Arts

NGOs have long used the visual arts (particularly drama) to educate people, particularly in health education and as a peace-building tool. There has also been research on embroidery and arts projects as skill-building, income-generating projects. However, little research has been conducted on embroidery projects and their impact on healing and empowerment in developing societies.⁴ Similarly, storytelling as a healing process and means of discussing issues needs to be explored more.

While there is relatively scant literature specifically concerning empowerment and arts projects, particularly in South Africa, there are some that deal directly with arts projects as anti-poverty initiatives. Miller (2007) examined relationships of women’s poverty, representation, and power, specifically exploring visual culture as a point of activation for self-expression, self-realization, agency, and activism. Miller’s study looked at a women’s art-making cooperative in an urban township in the Cape Province

⁴ The exception to this is Brenda Schmahmann’s research into the empowerment impacts of the Mapula project in Winterveld, South Africa (2006). Having said this, she does focus on economic issues to a far greater degree than the subsequent case study—Boitumelo Project.

of South Africa. The project brought together unemployed mothers of children under five to attend a three-month skills-training class in textile design, painting, and printing. The goal of the project was to create product that would be sold locally and internationally, therefore combating child malnutrition and raising families out of poverty. The artists in the cooperative are concerned both with economic circumstances and self-representation. The artworks, however, are usually group efforts created through a collaborative process so do not necessarily represent and reflect individual concerns or engagement with social issues. Miller (2007, p. 132) claims that the artworks “enhance the possibilities for gender justice by depicting the unique experiences of impoverished women in post-apartheid South Africa,” considering them representations of “feminist activist art.” She argues that “the very act of representing oneself as dignified and empowered is a necessary and politically significant act.” This has meaning for the participants in Boitumelo as well, even if they may not consider themselves part of the tradition of South African resistance artists or engaged in political struggle. They are, however “creating and embracing economic viability and the ability of visual culture to celebrate, resist, instruct, and empower.”

Much of the research that discusses handicraft-based development projects focus on maximizing income generation and therefore the economic empowerment impact for participants. (Pereira et. al. 2006) My research aims to broaden this research horizon, focusing on arts-and-crafts programs to understand related forms of empowerment that do not center on income generation.

Having explored the empowerment approach as an alternative form of development with particular reference to definitions, use by mainstream and third sector development agencies, and inherent contradictions, I have outlined some research gaps concerning non-economic empowerment impact as relates to NGO-run programs, specifically within the arts sector. The following chapters seek to contribute to research on non-profit arts-and-crafts programs, using an empowerment lens to examine changes in participants’ lives as a result of the programs.

CHAPTER III

BOITUMELO WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Africans have this thing called UBUNTU. It is about the essence of being human. It is part of the gift that Africans will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe a person is a person through other persons; that my humanity is caught up, bound up and inextricable in yours. When I dehumanize you I inexorably dehumanize myself. The solitary individual is a contradiction in terms and, therefore, you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own community, in belonging.

Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness: A Personal Overview of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 1999, p. 22

It is important to understand the broader political and economic context in which Boitumelo Project operates as well as the cultural assumptions and discourses, notions of human rights, as well as the laws and practices as they apply to the participants within the wider structures of society because these structures both facilitate and constrain empowerment. (Parpart et. al. 2002, p. 4) In this chapter I explore the spatial context in which my research exists, examine the South African development and social environment, and give an overview of Boitumelo Sewing Project, its umbrella organization (the Lutheran Community Outreach Foundation), and the research locations.

Empowerment and the South African Development Context

The largest economic power in sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa is ranked 129th out of 182 countries on the 2009 United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI). (UNDP, 2009) This places it in the lower half of the medium human development category despite the country having the 26th largest economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity. (CIA Factbook, 2009) Key development indicators for South Africa from the 2009 *Human Development Report* are shown in

Table 2 below. These show that the average life expectancy at birth is less than 52 years, with women expected to live longer than men. Despite higher general education enrollment ratios for girls than boys, which bodes well for future literacy of women, adult women currently have lower literacy rates than men.

Table 2: Key Development Indicators

Indicator	Combined	Females
Life expectancy at birth	51.9 years	106.8% of male rates
Adult literacy	88%	98.1% of male rates
Combined Gross Enrollment Ratio	6.8%	101.2% of male rates
GDP per capita	\$9,757 (PPP US\$)	
Gender Development Index	-	41 out of 155 countries
Gender Empowerment Measure	-	26 out of 109 countries

Source: 2009 UNDP HDI

While its HDI ranking is quite low (129), South Africa moves up the ranks when considering its Gender-related Development Index (GDI): 41 out of 155 countries. The GDI examines the expansion of capabilities, focusing on gender disparities in access to basic needs. However, access to basic needs does not necessarily mean that people have a high gender empowerment measure. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) goes a step further; looking at how basic needs are met and people are going on to take advantage of life's opportunities.

It is on the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) that we find an encouraging statistic: South Africa is ranked 26 out of 109 countries for which the UNDP has data. The GEM examines whether women are actively participating economically and politically. Indicators include the share of positions held by women in parliament, government, legislature, management, and in professional and positions. The measure also looks at gender disparity in earned income, aiming to reveal inequality of

opportunities. (UNDP, 2009) As such, despite decades of racial and gender inequalities and continuing challenges in terms of the education and health systems, along with inequality levels “comparable with the most unequal societies in the world,” South Africa is making impressive strides in terms of gender empowerment. (Schwabe, 2004),

In South Africa, the empowerment approach to development seems the logical one to adopt considering the strong nature of civil society, the historical experience of the politics of emancipation, and the familiarity of South Africans with responding to the call to action and self-actualization. As mentioned in the chapter opening quotation by Archbishop Tutu, the Bantu concept of *ubuntu* is important when considering issues of empowerment in Southern Africa. This concept, whereby “one is a person through others” should theoretically reinforce empowerment initiatives because when one of us is disempowered, we all are, and vice-versa. Perceiving the self primarily in relation to others within a wider inter-related collective solidarity (Kamwangamalu, 2008, p. 114) should also contribute to and reinforce the applicability of the local empowerment approach to development in the region because *ubuntu* forms part of the sociolinguistic and cultural experience of the region. Theoretically, this should have already manifested itself in engaged gender equity and equality with broad cross-gender and cross-class support, which to a certain extent has happened (see Table 2). However, economic and cultural realities also present barriers to effective empowerment even with *ubuntu*. In addition to local economic and cultural realities, Dibley (2009, p. 164) points to the negative consequences of globalization on the African continent, including “exploitation, exclusion, deliberate deprivation and human rights violation.” Adesina (2007, p. 27), reporting on studies conducted by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on social policy in sub-Saharan Africa, speaks of the ‘social vivisection’ of structural adjustment policies in the region. He notes (2007, p. 24) that the claims about empowerment and consultation with civil society are at best perfunctory because “Bretton Woods Institutions and donor countries persist in pushing the same macroeconomic policy instruments that failed to address the structural impediments in most African economies which created the vulnerability to external shocks in the first

instance.” As a result, Adesina argues for a rethinking of social policy. In terms of civil society, this would require the acknowledgement that interest groups within civil society (including some NGOs have commitments to the neoliberal project and therefore are undermining development. He calls for a social policy shift away from civil society dominated by NGOs to one led by social movements. This requires effecting gender equality within a distinct human rights perspective. (2007, p. 45)

In South Africa, as in many countries, the law stipulates legal equality and universal suffrage for men and women. However, the reality of gender equality is absent. Taylor (1995, p, 171) concurs with this opinion when referring to South Africa, arguing that empowerment is still very much located within the historical context of the apartheid legacy with its enduring impact on unequal resource distribution as well as the decades-long “struggle for liberation from political oppression and material deprivation.” Empowerment in this context is based significantly on Freire’s ideas about developing a collective consciousness of structural inequalities as a stepping stone to building capacities leading to individual and social capacity-building and empowerment, thereafter to effect social transformation. (Taylor, 1995, p. 171) Functional manifestations of disempowerment in the South African context involve insufficient public transportation development, historically unequal distribution of political power (which has, in part, been rectified since the democratic election of 1994), undereducated youth and unemployment levels leading to criminal activity, as well as enduring inequality in control of financial and natural resource wealth along racial lines. She argues that community empowerment and a renewal of citizen trust is the key community development and social reconstruction in South Africa. (1995, p. 180) I will argue in this and subsequent chapters that Boitumelo aims to achieve these and other objectives, effecting empowerment as a foundation for long-term social reconstruction in South Africa.

Partly as a result of strong female participation during the anti-apartheid struggle, South African women enjoy some of the highest status levels in the region. An active historical legacy is supported by the 1996 Constitution which prevents discrimination “directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender,

sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.” [South African Constitution, 1996, Section 9(3)] The Constitution also established a Commission for Gender Equality whose mandate it was to promote “respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality”. [Government of South Africa, 1996, Section 187(1)] Further solidifying the importance of gender equality from a legislative perspective, the government launched a Gender Policy Framework in 2000. This clearly defined empowerment within the South African context and located it as a process central to the development process.

EMPOWERMENT: Refers to the process of “conscientisation” which builds critical analytical skills for an individual to gain self-confidence in order to take control of her or his life. Empowerment of women is an essential process in the transformation of gender relations because it addresses the structural and underlying causes of subordination and discrimination.

Government of South Africa, *National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality*, 2000, p. xvii

This definition links empowerment directly with Freire’s notion of “conscientisation” even if Freire himself never mentions empowerment directly. Within the South African context, empowerment involves “self-confidence” which enables one to take control of one’s life. This is specifically linked in the policy to the empowerment of women as a key factor in transforming gender relations, but empowerment overall is applicable to both men and women.

The Gender Policy Framework overall outlines the government’s vision and plan for achieving gender equality, located within a human rights framework. The framework blends a basic needs approach of multi-sectoral program delivery with an empowerment approach which is considered a necessary precondition for strategic achievements. The framework also explains how disempowerment of women in South Africa has resulted in the feminization of poverty, disproportionately high female infection rates for HIV/AIDS, high incidence of gender-based violence, and unequal access to basic needs, resources, employment, land, and political power.

This policy, while representing a top-down approach, is indicative of a wider trend in South Africa. Empowerment is a very common phrase in South Africa, which is somewhat to be expected considering the decades-long disempowering impacts of the apartheid regime. The Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Act of 2003 is a key governmental initiative seeking to build broad-based private ownership as a means to stimulate widespread, more inclusive economic growth. Furthermore, the South African government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is a poverty alleviation effort that targets the empowerment of marginalized women by focusing on employment, educational, health support, and housing opportunities for women, while using gender analysis strategies to monitor these program areas. (UNDP, 2007, p. 3)

As of the April 2009 elections, South Africa has the third largest number of women in parliament globally, with 44.5% of seats in the lower house and 29.6% of seats in the upper house held by women. (IPU, 2010) Five of the nine provincial premiers are also women. The African National Congress (ANC) Women's League is currently trying to lobby for an Equality Bill that will extend the ANC's 50:50 gender quota to government institutions and the private sector. (Mataboge, 2010) The move is specifically aimed at "changing the socioeconomic and political landscape on gender" by requiring half of all state contract awardees, procurement beneficiaries, and political party members be women. (Mataboge, 2010) This, in addition to the already high level of women in political positions, reflects the relatively strong position that South African women play at least at policy-making and governmental levels. The extent to which this is having a trickle-down effect is debatable. Salo (2010, p. 37), for example, notes that women's physical presence in the state has increased but they have not substantially changed the daily reality for "the poorest sector of our population, namely, poor women and their dependents."

Black⁵ women in South Africa face a variety of challenges in that they must deal with ongoing racial discrimination, the socio-economic disadvantages of the

⁵ Population group references in this thesis follow the guidelines of Statistics South Africa (SSA), which conducts the national census. The census divides the South African population into four major groups: Black African, Coloured, Indian or Asian, and White.

institutionalized legacies of the apartheid system, and the realities of gender inequality in society. Despite the overwhelming focus on issues of empowerment in post-1994 South Africa in a range of sectors including health, education, and employment, effective empowerment of women and men has still not succeeded in the New South Africa. As Schmahmann (2006, p. 4) explains, unequal gender relations inform both social interactions, self-understanding, and the barriers denying women the freedom to manage their own lives as well as forming the foundation for the abuse and neglect faced by women in South African society. These can be seen in gender-based violence statistics, curative rapes, resurgent homophobia, and a focus on limited forms of empowerment only in official public spaces. This is despite the formalization of the Gender Policy Framework a decade ago. (Gqola, 2006) Numerous studies also point to the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) initiative as empowering only a small, largely male elite. (McGrath and Akoojee, 2007; UNDP, 2007) Similarly, while the government is committed to fundamental human rights and gender-equitable democracy, these ideals are “curtailed by the brute realities of neoliberalism.” (Salo, 2010, p. 31) Salo further identifies local barriers to gender equality, including new forms of nationalism and “public performances of hypermasculinity that draws upon a rich imagery of a romanticized traditional culture” which threaten the human rights of women and sexual minorities.

The third sector is a vital part of protecting human rights and advocating for gender equality where the government and corporate sector may be hamstrung by neo-liberal restrictions or focused more on other objectives. For example, the non-profit sector can operate to facilitate community participation, empowerment, and activism. Examining eight development projects in South Africa, Lyons et. al. (2001) have shown that there is a strong link between participation and empowerment. Specifically, they identified broad community participation as empowering and leading to future development initiatives. Conversely, a lack of participatory culture stifled empowerment and future development projects. This provides a vital perspective from which to

approach empowerment and development within the South African context, realizing the importance of participatory programs and engendering a culture of participation.

Research Locations: Hillbrow and Soweto

Having examined the wider South African context, it is important to have a sense of the key research locations: Hillbrow Johannesburg and Jabavu, Soweto. (Maps can be found in Appendix A.) Hillbrow is a high-density, inner city area with a high incidence of unemployment, crime, violence, urban degradation, drug use, sex work, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, and domestic abuse. Hillbrow covers about one square kilometers and has a population of approximately 100,000.

Jabavu, on the other hand, is a peri-urban location within Soweto. Soweto was historically planned as a racially segregated zone where cheap Black labor lived to travel the long distances to work in White-zoned central Johannesburg. Jabavu boasts a library that opened in 2008, but lacks other services or many avenues for employment. Most people do not work in the community and are forced to commute to other parts of Soweto or into Johannesburg for work and services.

Social Context

While conducting research in Johannesburg in January 2010, the government announced the national matric⁶ exam results. The results represented one of the lowest pass rates in the history of the education system, with incidents of suicide among students who failed and some rural schools reporting pass rates of 0%. (Keet, 2010) Years of structurally and functionally flawed education, as well as the legacy of massively imbalanced resource allocations during apartheid, have left an undereducated and unprepared labor workforce. Programs like Boitumelo aim to fill the gap, not with formal certificates but by increasing feelings of self-worth and confidence enough to re-engage with society in a formal and productive way.

⁶ Matric refers to the final year of high school in South Africa. It also refers to the comprehensive national exam which graduating seniors take and must pass in order to receive a National Senior Certificate. Results are also used to determine university entrance.

Failure to gain a formal education disadvantages people in a variety of ways. Education is not only about formal certificates which serve as keys to the next stage, be it employment or formal education. Education is also where people learn communication skills, group work, how to meet deadlines, debate skills, constructive criticism, evaluation, public speaking, and many other skills needed to ‘succeed’ in society. In addition to basic literacy, numeracy, and social knowledge skills, education is about participation, socialization, and the development of a wider sense of social responsibility. Similarly, people who go through the same national education system become part of a common national experience that contributes to nation building, a sense of unity, and presumably stability. This is not to say that everyday life does not teach social or interaction skills, but formal education is to a large extent the training ground for successful participation in the formal economy. As such, the benefits of success in formal education are immense. Conversely, the social barriers that emerge as a result of not experiencing formal education are also considerable.

In addition to historical and ongoing barriers to effective, formal education, participants in Boitumelo’s programs face a number of other challenges that have led to social and political marginalization. These include gender, linguistic/cultural barriers, and in many case, old age, disability, HIV/AIDS status, and poverty. In addition, there is evidence that levels of trust are extremely low in post-apartheid South Africa, as evidenced by the May 2008 campaign of xenophobic violence⁷ against African migrants. (Steenkamp, 2009) The large numbers of migrants in Hillbrow and Johannesburg in general mean that Boitumelo Boitumelo Project Hillbrow has many non-South African migrant participants. This fact provides opportunities to explore themes of xenophobia within social consciousness workshops and embroidery projects.

⁷ More than 60 people were killed, hundreds injured, property and businesses owned by migrants were looted and destroyed and an estimated 35,000 people became internally displaced. (Steenkamp, 2009)

Lutheran Community Outreach Foundation

The Lutheran Community Outreach Foundation forms the financial and physical support structure for Boitumelo in Hillbrow and Soweto. In Hillbrow, there is a much closer support structure because Boitumelo is physically located within the Outreach Foundation's premises. The Soweto project is still in its infancy and has far less structure and support, but is housed at a Lutheran Community complex and financed through the Outreach Foundation in Hillbrow.

Outreach Foundation is the umbrella organization within which six different projects are housed: a youth activities center, drama center, children's program, computer center, music center, and Boitumelo Sewing Project. The mission of the Foundation is:

To contribute to the healing the Inner City Community through community building and personal healing by offering care, education, and empowerment programs and facilitating community interaction in a peaceful and crime-free atmosphere.

Outreach Foundation, 2010.

Outreach Foundation is governed by a Board of Directors that meet five times a year to ensure that the organization is carrying out its mission and stated goals. These include being involved in community-building initiatives, encouraging personal development, imparting skills, and engendering hope and positive values. (Outreach, 2010) By offering various educational, cultural, and social activities, Outreach aims to improve individual lives and community environments during the process of transferring skills. As such, the objectives of community and individual healing are fundamental to six programs run by Outreach Foundation.

While the Outreach Foundation manager, individual program managers, facilitators,⁸ and the bulk of program participants are Black women from various parts of South Africa and other African countries, it should be noted that the CEO of Outreach Foundation and the rest of the members of the Board of Directors are White South

⁸ Facilitators are people who lead classes. They are not called trainers or teachers because while they help to create the curriculum and lead the transfer of skills process, they are considered facilitators in learning. Within Outreach Foundation and Boitumelo, learning is a multi-directional process which more experienced people—facilitators—assist with, but which involves all participants actively in the process.

African males. It is unlikely that this gendered structure will change considering the strong male-domination of the Lutheran Church structure. This in itself ensures that there is only limited potential for successful and widespread forms of empowerment at Boitumelo Project and Outreach Foundation because the program participants are not adequately represented in positions of power. While empowerment is located purely in the individual and collective realms, it is 'safe' and acceptable to the extant power structures.

Local and international Lutheran church members, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and Germany, support the organization. This adds to the financial sustainability of the organization and the six key programs offered. Boitumelo Project operates very much within these parameters, utilizing the financial support and focusing on the wider mission of community building and personal healing through skills transfer and empowerment. This will be explored more in the next section.

Boitumelo Sewing Project

There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan
Remarks at Beijing+10, February 2005

Boitumelo Sewing Project is a healing, communication, and empowerment project that operates in Hillbrow, Soweto, and Diepsloot, South Africa. It is one of the six programs offered at Outreach Foundation, targeting adults and women in particular. While Boitumelo receives the majority of its funding from Outreach Foundation and is governed by its organizational mandates and mission, there is also a degree of independence. Boitumelo has its own bank account and has a great deal of freedom, particularly on a programmatic level.

Boitumelo was started by Outreach Foundation in November 2001 and operates within the umbrella organization's conceptual framework of individual healing and community regeneration. Initially Boitumelo Project targeted unemployed single mothers whose children attended nearby day-care facilities, but this has been expanded to include various community members interested in learning arts and crafts and searching for a safe

space to engage society. Specifically, Boitumelo aims to use the arts, including sewing, embroidery, mosaic, and other art-and-craft forms, in a nurturing manner to develop the self worth of about 120 students, the significant majority of which are women. While Boitumelo targets women, it also encourages the participation of men, providing a vital complement to Outreach Foundation's other programs which aim at broad inclusion by targeting youth and children (music, drama, and life skills) and adults who sign up to learn computer skills. (Appelo, personal interview, March 2010) People are able to benefit from other programs within Outreach Foundation, with many Boitumelo participants having completed life skills, budgeting, and computer classes, as well as taking advantage of the free counseling services offered on-site.

The project aims to bring women (and men) into a safe environment where they can learn and share skills about a variety of different crafts. In addition, it aims to engender hope while facilitating communication and healing with the surrounding community. Methodologically, the project utilizes skill-building workshops and individual training in various arts and crafts as a way to build self worth and confidence. The social consciousness discussions and workshops engage a variety of topics including environmental pollution and waste management, the harsh realities of life in Johannesburg, domestic violence, the tragedy of HIV, the FIFA World Cup and fair play issues, and apartheid/liberation/freedom/identity/democracy in South Africa. As part of engaging with the discussions and workshops, participants are encouraged to create artistic output based on personal experience. In this way, participants explore various personal and social themes while practicing their craft skills and building artistic experience. Participants learn to work in various media to produce embroideries, quilts, cloth storybooks, and sculptures in recycled plastic, tile mosaics, beadwork, wirework, and digital prints. These skill-building activities operate as conduits by which to engage difficult personal topics, which in turn increase opportunities for hope and healing.

While the focus of Boitumelo's activities is healing and the promotion of self-worth, the creation of products also offers opportunities for artists to learn to create and sell marketable products and works of art. This helps families to earn income, which in

turn helps them exercise a measure of economic independence and feel an increased sense of self worth. Not all of the products are sold and payment to artists is dependent entirely on sales to individual, corporate, and government buyers. This offers the project some supplementary income as well: 65% of proceeds go to the crafters, while the balance is used to purchase materials used in the products.

As arts and crafts projects are not typically associated with the empowerment approach to development—unlike projects on education, micro-credit, grassroots participatory approaches, land rights, and representation—it is vital to explore critically the empowerment potential of the project. (Parpart et. al, 2002, p. 5) Boitumelo Project also represents a unique approach to empowerment through the arts as all participants are required to create their own designs and drawings which, I argue, forms a key element in the empowerment process. Even relatively similar projects, such as Mapula in the Winterveld or Tambani in Limpopo, have designated designers (either internal or external to the project) who do the drawings for project members. (Schmahmann, 2006, pp. 38-39) Unlike other projects, Boitumelo Project participants focus mainly on individual creations while Mapula participants usually work on subject matter in groups, making it difficult to identify shifts in empowered behavior, strategies to deal with social issues, or evidence of individual negotiation of conflict.

At this point it is necessary to explain why this thesis focuses on one key case study: Boitumelo Project. While it might have been more useful to conduct a more in-depth comparative analysis, I chose to focus on one study in more depth than would otherwise be possible given time and distance constraints. The in-depth nature of this study offers the potential to uncover deeper issues around empowerment and potential solutions to overcoming empowerment barriers, both internally and socially. At the outset, I thought it might be possible that Boitumelo represented a “critical case” (Flyvbjerg, 2006) that could demonstrate strategic importance in relation to a general problem, in this case how to positively engender empowerment. In particular, I selected Boitumelo for in-depth study because Outreach Foundation and Boitumelo identified empowerment through healing as the key aim of their activities, unlike other arts-and-crafts capacity-

building programs. Given that South Africa has endured decades of injustice and seen myriad human rights abuses perpetrated under apartheid, I thought that the idea of empowerment through healing was not only unique but also absolutely necessary. I perceived that Boitumelo could be what Flyvbjerg calls a “most likely critical case.” He explains that in such cases, “If it is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases.” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230) In the case of Boitumelo, which is supported by an umbrella organization specifically focused on healing and empowerment and which focuses itself specifically on long-term individual and collective empowerment rather than economic income-generation or other short-term functional outcomes, I conceived that it could be a “most likely” critical case. This is because, within this strong empowerment ethos underpinning the organization, if effective empowerment is not engendered within this project, then it would be difficult to find it engendered through any other projects.

Profile of Programs and Participants

Boitumelo Sewing Project is in Hillbrow and the Soweto group is known only informally as Boitumelo. For ease of understanding the two will be referred to Boitumelo Hillbrow and Boitumelo Soweto. The official name of the Soweto group is the DAM (Diakonia Aids Mission) Project because the Diakonia Aids Mission provides a room for Boitumelo facilitators to conduct arts workshops and training.

Boitumelo Hillbrow

The Hillbrow project attracts people from a much wider sphere geographically and demographically than the Soweto project. There can be anywhere between 60 and 120 participants at the Hillbrow site over a year, which varies according to season and the other commitments of participants.

The Hillbrow project includes both female and male participants ranging from their 20s to their 60s. There are far more women than men participating in the project, with women making up about 95% of the participants. Most people are in their 30s and 40s and there is a high representation from other provinces and countries as is to be

expected in the downtown area of a major city. The Hillbrow project is very diverse and yet participants freely talk and joke about their ethnic group and country of origin. There is even playful mocking based on cultural stereotypes, which reveals how much of a safe space the project has created, especially considering the xenophobic violence that immigrant populations have faced in Johannesburg in recent years.

A number of the participants—both in Hillbrow and Soweto—are single parents because they were abandoned by their partners. One woman in her early 30s in Hillbrow explained, “My husband is not in the picture. We can forget about him.” As such, she is the sole provider for her three children and must work elsewhere to supplement income she receives from the project.

There are a few Saturday students at the Hillbrow location. Currently all Saturday participants are women, with no men represented. These are participants who work elsewhere during the week and therefore cannot come on weekdays. Many are previous participants who have gone on to other jobs but still want to retain ties to the project. Some, however, are new to the project and want to participate even if only on weekends. The commitment and participation of the weekend students reinforces the notion that the focus of the project is not economic. These participants are benefiting from other incomes but still choose to participate in the project on weekends because of the social interaction, personal healing, and psychological and social empowerment aspects.

The people at the project work very hard—many are there from 9am until 6pm. The students at the Hillbrow location benefit from the experience of four training facilitators, each with different levels of experience.

Boitumelo Soweto

In January 2008, Boitumelo expanded its training and healing workshops and skill-building activities to an economically disadvantaged community in Jabavu, Soweto. There, roughly 30 women are introduced to embroidery and sewing skills while exploring social issues including xenophobia, fairness, HIV/AIDS, and the linked concepts of roots and family. Past projects have dealt with themes such as safety and security, the church,

xenophobia, RDP⁹ housing, the legacy of apartheid, human rights, environmental pollution, domestic violence, and paths to democracy. Sub-themes involve examining the people in participants' lives, exploring feelings of conflict, dealing with relationships, and brainstorming how to improve the complexities and challenges of daily life. One Soweto student explained that she is learning "to meet more and not to cry; take out the stress...to keep myself busy and not thinking so much helps me to relax." More so than the skill-building, participants indicate that Boitumelo provides is a safe, supportive, caring environment to discuss realities of abuse, insecurity, and the fear of dying and leaving small children behind with no one to look after them.

Direct skills that are focused on at Boitumelo Soweto include writing, drawing design skills, embroidery, color exploration, machine skills, and quality control. Indirect skills include environmental issues, family relations, working in groups, meeting deadlines, social awareness, coping strategies, speaking in front of others, mentoring new students, participating in community activities, personal responsibility, and commitment.

The Soweto project attracts women in their 50s and 60s, with only a very few participants of younger ages. Most of the participants are from Soweto, with a couple originally from other provinces, indicating a smaller sphere of influence than the Hillbrow project. There are roughly 30 participants at the Soweto project, which operates only one day a week due to limited funding available to pay facilitators and provide materials.

Boitumelo Diepsloot

This is the site of a new Boitumelo project that has been ongoing since 2009. The Diepsloot project was started as a result of requests made by women living in the area. Geographically located to the north of Johannesburg, Diepsloot was established in the mid-1990s as an informal settlement of people working in the northern suburbs of the city.

⁹ Reconstruction and Development Programme: this was a socio-economic policy framework instituted by the African National Congress (ANC) government in 1994. The policy aimed to meet basic needs through public works projects in housing, electricity, water, and health care. The program also aimed at facilitating land reform, education, social security, and job creation.

There is a great deal of unemployment, impoverishment, and crime in the area, which is estimated to be home to 150,000 people. (Berak, 2009)

I did not visit Diepsloot during the research period due to constraints of time and distance. Currently the participants (approximately five) come to Hillbrow for training and engagement with workshops. In the future, Boitumelo hopes to have a permanent site, facilitator, and ongoing program in Diepsloot.

Similarities between Hillbrow and Soweto Projects

In the Hillbrow and Soweto projects there is a feeling of mutual assistance. New participants receive guidance from facilitators and experienced participants alike. People lacking confidence in their writing, language, or drawing, ask for and receive help from facilitators and other participants. In Soweto, in particular, younger participants look to older ones for help with their English and spelling when they want to write a message on their cloths. The culture of sharing knowledge, ideas, designs, advice, and counsel makes for a cooperative rather than competitive atmosphere, even though participants do receive some money for their work and so could perceive the situation as involving competition for limited resources to a certain extent.

Unlike other projects, people are not turned away from Boitumelo Sewing Project. There is no limit to class size and the organization is committed to finding space and resources for every applicant that registers for the classes. While there may sometimes be a crowded atmosphere at the training facilities, the Creative Director believe strongly that a culture of inclusion is important to ensure unity and equality within the project.

Finally, facilitators come from the community in which they work (Hillbrow or Soweto), as Boitumelo focuses on training local people to higher positions. All of the current facilitators started as project participants and displayed the competence and leadership skills to be trained as facilitators. This maximizes the impact of positive local role models and enhances communication with and participation of the community.

Locating the Researcher

It is important to note my position as outsider during my time at Boitumelo. I was warmly welcomed by management and the Creative Director, but the facilitators and project participants¹⁰ were highly skeptical of outsiders. Facilitators and participants were openly suspicious about my motives and why I wanted to learn about them and the project. Questions were unashamedly direct and included “Do you really care?” and “Why are you here?” This suspicion of non-participant outsiders to the group was not specific to me as participants had refused to talk to the current Creative Director when she first arrived: they were suspicious of her, her position, and her methodologies. Only after three months of working with her and learning from her every day did facilitators and participants start to trust and understand the new Creative Director.

As such, it is important to be aware of pre-conceived notions of ‘outsiders’ and what they bring and plan to take from the research experience. Building a relationship of trust between the researcher and project participants was vital for me, which was why I spent the first month simply working for the project and spending time with the participants. I only conducted my research during the final month, after the participants had spent time with me in a non-research capacity and began to trust me. Communication styles used and methodologies chosen have various impacts on research outcomes, which is why I spent a month trying to learn the best modes of communication and altering planned research methodologies. For example, after spending a month at Boitumelo it became evident that many people were reluctant to speak out in group situations and were far more comfortable to speak on an individual level instead. As a result, I decided against focus group methodologies and instead conducted small-group or individual interviews in addition to the participant observation.

My personal race and economic class presented other barriers to communication and in-depth research that need to be addressed. As a White South African woman who,

¹⁰ The term “participants” is actively used in the project, as opposed to “beneficiaries.” This is an indication that people are active agents in their own transformation rather than passive recipients of programming.

despite moving to the country mere weeks before Nelson Mandela walked free in February 1990, undoubtedly benefited from the apartheid legacy, I represent the ‘oppressor’ for Boitumelo participants. Whether or not they perceived me as such remained unspoken, but I maintained an economic and societal position as yet unattainable by the women and men I was interviewing, further restricting the potential for frank communication and trust on their part and objective understanding of their realities and perceptions on mine.

In addition to the communication and understanding barriers inherent in my participation as ‘outsider,’ various other biases and research barriers are evident in the study. Johannesburg, South Africa was chosen because of personal history, familiarity, and interest reasons. The mostly urban projects were selected as a result of limited time and financial resources available to travel out of Johannesburg and spend time in other cities or provinces. As explained above, Boitumelo Project was introduced to me through personal contacts after an exhaustive search was conducted for appropriate non-profit projects in greater Johannesburg. Other arts-and-crafts project contacts were made in-country using snowball techniques. Finally, time spent in Johannesburg amounted to only ten weeks between January and March, reflecting a limited time bias as well as a seasonal bias. I was only able to observe the attendance, participation, and power dynamics of the project during the early part of the year. Many participants had not returned after the extended summer break, while others were dealing with family and financial constraints associated with the beginning of the school year.¹¹ As a result, this research fails to investigate power issues that may be associated with other seasons and through different times of the year, such as during winter when economic pressures may be increased as a result of weather-related transportation pressures and energy costs.

As Chambers (2008) notes, spatial, project, person, professional, diplomatic, and seasonal biases have a significant impact on research and efforts should be made to avoid them as much as possible. To the best of my abilities, I did try to avoid spatial, personal, and professional biases: by rejecting projects being run in the richer and more accessible

¹¹ The South African academic year runs from January to December.

suburbs of Johannesburg, by researching projects with which I had no previous personal or professional connection, and trying to explore issues which were hitherto outside of my sphere of experience and comfort. However, I acknowledge that a number of biases still reside unconsciously within the research.

CHAPTER IV

THE BOITUMELO APPROACH: MOVING TOWARD AGENCY

If you come to the project, and you bring your mind, you will improve your life. Most of us have nothing to do so we stay at home, or we stay on the streets; we waste our time. This is better—join a group. Put your hand inside with the others and see what it is like. No one can stand for you. You stand yourself. If you do nothing, nothing will change . . . It is better to come to the project and push your mind to do something . . . then your life will be better.

Boitumelo Hillbrow participant encouraging a new person to join

Nothing, arguably, is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 1999, p. 203

Sen argues that the past few decades have seen approaches to improving people's well-being move from welfarist to emphasizing agency (1999, p. 189). Boitumelo Project takes this approach, with the first act of agency evident when participants walk through the door to sign up for programs. Some people walk in and are too scared to sign up so they make excuses and leave. Some sign up straight away. Some come back later after they have had time to assess the situation. While there is often encouragement from current participants, no one is forced into joining. Signing up is the first act of agency and this act casts participants as active agents of change in their own lives, taking steps to transform their own realities and those of people around them. Boitumelo cannot be credited with increasing empowerment in this first instance of signing up. Boitumelo's existence and programs provides potential participants with their initial choice: the opportunity to participate. However, once the participant has signed up,

facilitation of active empowerment forms part of Boitumelo's programs and implementation ethos.

This chapter explores attitudes to power within Boitumelo Sewing Project, attitudes to power within the umbrella organization, and comparisons with other arts and crafts projects. I conclude by positing that the Boitumelo model of empowerment is unique, to a large degree because of the way that empowerment is framed by management and project implementation policies carried out as a result.

Attitudes to Power within Boitumelo

Power Structure

As there are men and women from different countries, age groups, ethnic and linguistic groups, as well as both rural and urban areas participating in Boitumelo's programs, the access and attitudes to power within the project are vital. Problems arise because of internal misunderstandings resulting from perception and communication gaps. As a result, Boitumelo has adopted and attempts to operate on the basis of a flat structure and open-door policy whereby participants and facilitators can go directly to the Creative Director or even the management of Outreach Foundation to ask questions, make complaints, or offer suggestions on how to improve the program.

The idea behind flat organizational structure is that program participants will be more engaged in the skills transfer and healing process if they have direct and easy access to management. Within Boitumelo, participants usually deal with project facilitators directly but they are encouraged to talk with the Creative Director on an informal basis to build relationships or more formally to discuss program issues and ideas. Having said that, as most of the program participants are economically lower class than the Creative Director, there is a distance between participants and management that involves more than mere organizational power structure. The Creative Director is a White South African of German descent, which in terms of South Africa's racially charged past, puts her in a historically privileged position. Participants are from various areas of South Africa and the rest of the continent, and as Black Africans, are located in historical positions of disadvantage. This, together with other cultural and linguistic differences that will be

discussed below, means that even though Boitumelo management try to implement a flat power structure, open and equal communication is problematic within the project. The Creative Director is well aware of this gap between herself and new participants, preferring to let people come and talk to her when they are comfortable with the situation. She explains, “When a student decides to have a conversation with me; that is when I consider it a success.” (Personal interview, March 2010)

Another example of attempts to create a flat organizational structure can be seen in the attempt to share management of project funds with facilitators. Two senior facilitators have signing powers on the account and one controls her own budget. This is an attempt at devolving power throughout the project. Having said that, project participants do not have control over the money. They do participate in discussions of how to spend funds and which projects to take on, but final decisions are made by the Creative Director and senior facilitators, which limit the effectiveness of attempts to implement a flat organizational structure.

Issues sometimes arise as a result of cultural and conceptual gaps between donors and the Boitumelo project participants. In particular, these often revolve around issues of funding, who controls the money, and how it should be used. As there is a flat decision-making structure, how the money is used is usually resolved between participants in conference with staff. The focus, however, is on the participants, indicating an emphasis on their own power and responsibility.

In addition to donor funds, there are funds that come in from the sale of products made at Boitumelo Project. Some of these are sold to individual customers and others to corporate and government entities. These funds are split between the project and the artists that made the pieces: 35% of the sale money goes to the project and 65% goes to the artists. This was originally decided in consultation with the artists and has become general practice at the project. While the 35% that goes to Boitumelo does not even come close to covering operating costs, it contributes to the supplies of cotton and cloth as well as some of the tea and coffee provided for participants during their time at the project. The concept of splitting the sale proceeds was also intended to reinforce notions of

responsibility and giving back to the project, in part countering the welfarist model. The research did not encounter any complaints concerning the system.

Responsibility for control of the Boitumelo bank account is also shared between the senior facilitators and Creative Director. Any money coming out of the account requires two signatures and the bookkeeping records are open to participants to monitor. This encourages an open communication about the organization's finances. However, most participants leave the financial side of the project to the two senior facilitators and Creative Director. It is unclear whether this is a result of lack of interest, perceived lack of capacity, or perceptions that financial decisions lie outside of the participants' role and scope of power.

Language Issues

There are issues to be considered around language and power within the project. First, meetings are held in English, which disempowers second-language speakers of English to a large extent, whether they are facilitators or participants. There are also disempowering issues to be considered as concerns the language of development. Certain concepts such as monitoring and evaluation, work plans, deadlines, and meeting minutes, are alien to facilitators and project participants alike. (Win, 2004) This disempowering aspect of English and development language manifests in a variety of ways in the project. During the research period, Outreach Foundation was undergoing an organizational evaluation that required project facilitators to participate in project and participant assessments. Questionnaires, workshops, and interviews were entirely in English, which prevented less confident members of the project—facilitators and participants—from participating fully and effectively. This prevented people from being able to fully voice their opinions and ideas, further disempowering them because as they are employees of and participants in the project and could very well be directly impacted by the evaluation results. Similarly, assessments were not anonymous, leaving participants open to possible retaliation later.

There is, however, another aspect to the issue of the politics of language. Outside of official meetings, a variety of languages are used in the project. People have the choice of engaging in any language they like, provided others also understand that language, the most common being Sotho.¹² People unfamiliar with this language are at a disadvantage but can use English, which most participants understand to a certain degree. Many participants see the interaction at the project as an opportunity to learn another language, another example of how the project acts as an information exchange and arena of broad-based capacity building not limited to arts and crafts.

While English is usually not the participants' first language, most of the designs created at Boitumelo are in English. Participants have a choice of which language to use in their designs and Soweto participants—many of whom are less confident in their English—often use languages other than English. Hillbrow participants, however, tend to use English, partly because they are more comfortable with it in the urban context and also because consumers are usually more likely to purchase pieces they can understand at least to a certain degree.

From a research perspective, I was at a distinct disadvantage by being excluded from many conversations because I do not understand Sotho. When people wanted to include me, however, they would translate for me or switch to English. This gave project participants the power over when and how to include me. Therefore, the power over information transmitted to me was squarely in the hands of the project participants, rather than being controlled by me, the researcher. This helped to equalize the power inequality inherent in these sorts of research efforts.

Decision-making in Boitumelo

In line with the flat structure and participatory approach within Boitumelo, anyone is allowed to join the project. Similarly, if participants are perceived as 'making problems', they can be voted out by the majority. Those excluded are able to ask to be included again at a later stage, which again is subject to a vote by project participants.

¹² One of the South Africa's 11 official languages.

The facilitators at the project have a fair amount of power, with the most senior facilitator controlling her own budget. This is used to compensate participants for their transportation costs as well as buying tea, coffee, and any other short-term items required to keep the project running. Facilitators are also the first line of communication for participants that are having personal problems or need conflict resolution assistance within the project. Decisions on how to resolve conflicts are left to the participants and facilitators unless there is no resolution, in which case consultation is taken to the Creative Director and/or Outreach Foundation. The Creative Director is responsible for longer-term budgeting and planning, but this is conducted in discussion with facilitators and participants because there is a widespread ethos of participation and consultation. Hillbrow participants in their 30s explained, “At Boitumelo, I can share my ideas” and “Here, I am heard by someone.” Another Hillbrow participant in her 30s noted, “I want to add more of my ideas in future.” Finally, a facilitator at Hillbrow explained “We don’t hide. . . We always talk directly.” In this way, participants and facilitators have some power in planning decisions that are made in the long term.¹³

Participants also have a lot of power over which projects are accepted and which are not. As there is fairly stable funding from Outreach Foundation for basic day-to-day running of Boitumelo Project, there is some flexibility to pick and choose appropriate projects. This gives a large degree of power to project participants rather than donors, who often have particular ideas and rigid timelines for creative projects, which the participants may not be or able to meet, regardless of potential economic benefit. The power in this case remains firmly with the project participants, who retain the ability to vote on projects and their terms (e.g. deadlines). Participants also have a fair amount of creative license concerning the products they produce. The creative process in this case remains located in the realm of healing and therapy, with client- or donor-driven projects accepted as and when they fit within the needs and timelines of the project participants.

¹³ It would be interesting to know if participants generally have input into who is promoted to the role of facilitator and who is hired as Creative Director in Boitumelo Project. I did not ask these questions but they would be vital in future research on participatory processes and empowerment in non-profit projects such as Boitumelo.

Similarly, participants have a great deal of creative license concerning their creations. Except in the rare situation whereby clients are very specific with design requirements, project participants create their own designs based on their experiences or those of friends and family. In other projects (e.g. Tambani, Kaross) specific people create the designs that are then embroidered by project participants. It is here that Boitumelo is innovative and unique: participants must create their own designs.

Often products are created based on a theme that has been explored in workshops (e.g. xenophobic violence). The specific designs and products, however, are left up to the participants. Many do not like to draw but the Creative Director insists that they draw their own designs (either from experience or stories from friends or the media), choose their own colors, and decide for themselves the embroidery, sewing, and appliqué techniques best suited to their designs. A Soweto participant in her 60s explained to me, “I like words, not designs. Designs are hard for me but I like to make stories.” Being pushed outside of comfortable personal space, be it into the realm of design, or story creation, public speaking, or using a new artistic technique, is part of the empowerment process at Boitumelo. The Creative Director feels that pushing people, even a little bit, within a safe space, leads them to develop better artistic and life skills. She explained that

People need to be pushed to try other things as well, even though they love the embroidery. For example, we did the weaving. There was not a lot of product from that but I think it is a useful skill. Also, some people are not good at embroidery or sewing so it is useful to give them the opportunity to do something else.

(Personal Interview, March, 2010)

There are a range of things happening here: participants are being pushed to try something new even though they may not feel confident or comfortable in their abilities or experience. People are also being given an opportunity to try something that they may end up being better at than things they are currently doing, facilitating new learning about themselves. To a certain degree, trying new things is difficult and risky. However, within the safe space of Boitumelo Project, people are pushed to take risks and try new things. In particular, they are pushed to create their own stories and designs and to develop their skills and confidence that way, rather than relying on other people’s proven artistic

talents. This also helps participants engage on a more personal level with the issues and product being created.

The Creative Process

The products at Boitumelo function on a variety of levels. In early stages of training, the sewing and embroidery creations are often taken home by participants or made into simple cloths for their own use. Later, however, as participants' skills improve and they participate in more social consciousness workshops, the products are purchased by occasional consumers, regular customers, and corporate buyers. The products can be functional—turned into bags or cushion covers—or even pieces of art, turned into wall hangings and storybooks reflecting social realities and current issues. Participants are able to create their own designs and draw from their own experiences and those of their communities to do so, which leads to a creation of personal space, control over their own story, and the emergence of a new perspective.

While other projects do not focus on this, Boitumelo Project insists that all artists include their name on the artwork that they have designed, created, and eventually (hopefully) sold. Usually the piece is labeled “Boitumelo Project” as well as including the artist's first name somewhere on the piece. This instills a sense of ownership and pride in each piece as well as linking the consumer of the art to the person who created it. If artists would prefer to remain anonymous for whatever reason, they are able to use pseudonyms or nicknames, exercising personal choice in labeling of their own creations.

The Concept of Healing: “Stitching Lives Together”

As the Creative Director of Boitumelo explained to me, “the embroidery is only part of it. Mostly, for the participants, it is the process that is important. There is something in the act of stitching a life together.” (Personal interview, February 2010). This perspective focuses on the individual empowerment taking place at Boitumelo Project, with personal and wider social issues being explored through embroidery,

workshops, group discussion, and personal reflection. The Creative Director further explained:

There is so much indirect learning that takes place. They learn embroidery, thinking through themes systematically, standing up in front of people, speaking, explaining, answering questions, exploring themes, often in a second language. Sometimes I think we do not do enough direct learning, but the non-traditional learning styles are so important and achieve so much.

Personal interview, February 2010

When considering other projects discussed later in this chapter, social consciousness seems to be the key unique aspect of Boitumelo's work. The social consciousness aspect leads to individual and group exploration of personal and wider social issues, from which point healing and then empowerment can come.

The flexibility of the project itself functions to its advantage and the benefit of participants. It provides a safe and welcoming space for participants who are not required to be there at set hours. However, if they do arrive before 9am and stay for four hours or more, they are entitled to transport money. This adds an element of structure, affording participants the opportunity to be at the project for specific hours if it fits into their schedule, otherwise they can come, engage in training, participate in workshops, collect cloth and cotton, and feel free to finish the embroidery anywhere. Many participants choose to remain at the project but others take embroideries home or to other jobs to complete.

When they have finished a piece, artists are invited to show their piece to the group, explaining what it depicts and where the idea came from. This enhances confidence in speaking in front of people as well as instilling pride in their work. People are overwhelmingly applauded and congratulated for their pieces as well as for their courage in standing up to show their work to their peers.

Other research concerning the healing aspect of embroidery projects has been conducted by Brenda Schmahmann in the Winterveld, north of Pretoria. In that case, Mapula Embroidery Project participants use their embroideries to depict issues of current concern including trauma and suffering. Schmahmann (2005, p. 65) goes as far as to

suggest that the embroideries “provide a forum for members of the project to articulate concerns they might otherwise feel unable to express.”

Social Issues Addressed in Boitumelo Art

A variety of social issues inform the subject matter explored by and included in the embroideries and mosaics created by Boitumelo Project participants. These include issues of fairness and unfairness, domestic violence, gender roles, reproductive choice, xenophobic violence, HIV/AIDS, music, politics, nature, and sports. Examples of Boitumelo works are given in Appendix G and discussed below.¹⁴

Fair/Unfair

Perhaps more than any other body of work, the “Fair/Unfair” collection of Boitumelo pieces reflects various manifestations of individual and collective forms of power. The Fair/Unfair project examined different social issues with participant asked to give the “unfair” and “fair” side to the story. Moving from the unfair to the fair, one can see clearly a movement to empowerment as participants visualize society and situations as they would like them to be, developing along the way strategies for effecting positive, empowered change.

Figure 2 depicts a situation of domestic violence. With the help of a social worker, love, medical attention, and victim counseling, Figure 3 shows the “fair” corollary in which the family is happy and peaceful.

Figure 4 is an embroidery that shows the unfair division of labor between men and women, with a woman doing all the work as well as raising children and taking care of household duties while the man sits and drinks beer but does not help. A more equal gender situation is shown in Figure 5. In this “fair” vision of society, men and women work

¹⁴ These pieces were chosen largely at random by me, the researcher. They are intended to provide samples of work that I saw during the time I was in South Africa. In particular, I tried to show the range of work produced recently, covering themes such as violence, gender inequality, health, education, sports, recreation, family, and daily life.

together to make light work. Women are not restricted into specific gender roles but are able to work in the same area as men equally and all benefit as a result.

Figure 6 discusses reproductive health choices. It depicts a situation in which a pregnant daughter is forced by her parents to abort her baby. After doing this we see that she is “lost” and that there are health implications, even if she is back in school. Figure 7, on the other hand, shows a situation in which the woman’s choice to keep her baby has been respected. She went back to school, is working, and is successful. The piece reiterates individual rights and the importance about choice—a direct link to personal empowerment.

Xenophobia

During May 2008 there were a series of xenophobic attacks on migrants from neighboring Southern African countries. This remains a very important issue in South Africa as an estimated 1.2 million people (2.6% of the population) are international immigrants. (UNDP, 2009) Months after the violence, Boitumelo tried to engage the issue with workshops on the xenophobia, which was particularly useful in light of the many different nationalities and migrants represented at the project. As many of the Boitumelo participants are non-South African (perhaps 70%), this theme was apparently particularly difficult to explore in discussions and artistic creation. The workshops, however, helped to alleviate participants’ fears, increase levels of trust, and improve cross-nationality bonds. Steenkamp (2009, p. 446) actually recommends “community-based initiatives to promote co-operation and shared enterprise between immigrants and locals...(to) increase trust and stress interdependence.” Boitumelo project has long been doing this in the arena of xenophobia and myriad other social issues, with a clear impact on individual and collective empowerment. Figures 8-10 show some of the embroideries created by Boitumelo participants as a result of the xenophobia discussions and workshops.

The pieces selected deal with causes (poor service delivery, discrimination against foreigners, bad people), effects (demonstrating, shooting, burning houses, fighting), and strategies for coping (increasing strikers’ pay, fighting back, and taking refuge in

churches). Working through the issues and strategies for dealing with the violence is directly linked to individual and collective empowerment. Individuals develop personal coping strategies as well as finding the courage to share these and related issues with the wider group—enhancing interaction skills, comfort, and collective empowerment.

Other Issues Examined

Figures 11-19 give a sample of some other key issues Boitumelo participants have engaged in their creations. These include the economic difficulties and harsh realities of daily life (Fig. 11), the perception that education is vital to future success (Fig. 12), historic difficulties of women's lives in rural areas (Fig. 13), and HIV/AIDS (Fig. 14). As the majority of Boitumelo participants live with HIV/AIDS, this topic forms part of the realities of their daily lives. The reality of the “female face” of HIV/AIDS is represented not only in the embroideries but also in the lives of the Boitumelo artists.¹⁵ The representation of HIV/AIDS themes in Boitumelo creations not only reflects the prevalence of the issue in daily life; it is also an example of participants using the medium of art to comment on and depict an issue which for many people is still a shameful to discuss directly and openly in private and public.

Figure 15 shows links to nature and traditional medicines and also forms part of a Boitumelo Project exploration of “trees” as representations of families. Participants workshopped the idea of themselves as: themselves as the trunk, their ancestors as the roots, their children as the branches, and grandchildren as the leaves and fruits. This project dealt with ideas of interconnectedness and the importance of supporting each other. It also engaged notions of the natural importance of trees and plants, the interdependence of people and nature, and reflected the links between family members over generations and time spans.

Figures 16 and 17 formed part of a series of works that were created to celebrate Miriam Makeba (Mama Afrika's) life after she passed away in late 2008. The selection of

¹⁵ In a March 2005 speech, then-president Nelson Mandela explained, “We are all affected by the Aids pandemic. But more than others this epidemic carries the face of women. For it is women who bear the most significant burden of HIV and AIDS.”

this theme reflects the power that artists have in choosing the themes of their work individually and collectively. While not necessarily reflecting a social problem, artists were inspired to celebrate the life, activism, music, and power of Makeba's life and what she has meant for South Africans.

Finally, themes such as local pride and sports passions can be seen in Figures 18 and 19. The first encourages visitors to travel to Soweto, lauding the reasons to visit the vibrant city next door to Johannesburg and reflecting the pride of project participants who live there. Figure 19 was created as part of preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, emphasizing fair play and entertainment in sport.

Behind using artistic expression as a conduit to personal healing is the idea that arts and culture can be used for social transformation and inner city regeneration. Using workshops to discuss a range of themes relevant to individuals and communities, and then encouraging participants to explore these themes through their artistic endeavors, Boitumelo activities operate as a form of therapy. I argue that participants are given the opportunity to explore their ideas and opinions on a range of subjects, discussing them verbally and then engaging them in art. Outreach Foundation has a trained counselor on staff to offer professional therapy if and when participants feel the need to explore issues in greater depth. In this way, Boitumelo uses art and the social consciousness workshops to link the individual and the community levels. People are encouraged to explore their creativity, examine issues through personal and social lenses, and develop self-awareness and self-confidence.

Observations on Empowerment within Boitumelo

Spending time at the project prompted me to start questioning issues of empowerment specifically with reference to the project participants, facilitators, and management staff. In particular, it became evident that it was important for project participants to be actively involved in the details of the project, the creative process, the creation of products (bags, cushions, wall hangings, etc.), setting prices, marketing strategies, and engaging with clients. There is another element in that the healing aspect of the project seemed more successful because the participants were personally connected

to the product pieces along every stage of the production. At the same time, participants are not only learning about and being involved in the production process; they are also gaining confidence in terms of social engagement with others, understanding of work ethics, meeting deadlines, discussing issues in small and large groups, and taking on responsibilities and fulfilling duties within the wider project. These elements, for facilitators and participants alike, enhance empowerment opportunities and impacts at Boitumelo Project.

Comprehensive involvement is key in the empowerment process. Facilitators teach participants how to draw, how to embroider, and how to keep track of what they have done in the project. Participants must then create their own drawings and designs and later are able to receive some money for the products when sold. In a number of cases, participants are also involved in helping to market and sell the products at art exhibitions and markets. The project rationale behind encouraging program participants to sit at exhibitions and markets is that they are afforded the opportunity to learn about what sells and what does not sell. In addition, participants learn about engaging with customers, as well as the difficulties of price negotiation and financial tracking. This encourages participants to strive for better quality and designs in the future as well as building their capacity in different stages of the design, creation, development, and sale of products. These aspects involve economic motivation and reward but focus more on personal and community engagement and development.

Boitumelo Project focuses on individual psychological and social empowerment rather than economic empowerment. This can be seen in the focus on individual needs, desires, designs, and control of product for personal requirements rather than those of clients. The Creative Director encourages participants to work on products they feel close to and passionate about. Even if there are specific requests from clients, they are not always filled. If project participants do not want to work on something or are not interested in it, they are free to decline, making it difficult to deal with corporate clients and commissions sometimes because there is no guarantee that the women are going to be interested in doing the theme and working to a specific deadline. This means that there

is a high degree of local participation in the decision-making process, emphasizing personal psychological and social empowerment rather than subsuming these needs to the requirements of customers; regardless of potential concomitant economic empowerment.

I argue that by focusing on non-economic forms of empowerment in addition to including economic aspects, Boitumelo Project avoids the trap that other women's empowerment programs fall into: that of compartmentalizing women in certain sectors of the economy, forcing them to conform to the market economy, and thereby constraining their empowerment. (Lairap-Fonderson, 2002) Having said that, micro-enterprise and other economically focused "empowerment projects" projects tend to actually empower the market economy instead of the women involved, because the projects force women to adhere to meetings, rules, disciplines, timetables, and development norms. (Lairup-Fonderson, 2002) Boitumelo, it could be argued, does something of the same thing. It encourages women to become part of the economy, compartmentalizing them in domestically focused embroidery and sewing activities, paying them minimal amounts for their labor, and failing to challenge the inherent inequalities in the market system. Women are co-opted into the system of inequality, which then becomes normalized. Boitumelo, however, offers women choices and also focuses on non-economic forms of empowerment. Nonetheless, the use of reporting standards, monitoring and evaluation, meeting rules, English as the official language, and other rules and regulations force the participants to change, not the system.

There is no differentiation of responsibilities by gender within the project. While the project participants are overwhelmingly women (97%), there are a few men who regularly participate. Women and men all engage in design, sewing, embroidery, appliqué, mosaic, attaching for quilts, cushions, and bags, sit at markets, do ironing, and visit other sites for meetings and training. Each participant obviously has preferences for certain activities and perceptions about personal strengths and weaknesses in different areas. These preferences and strengths were not observed to break down along gender lines.

A mix of women and men participating at the project with equal opportunities to learn, be creative, and become facilitators reinforces the notion that the empowerment of women is beneficial to men as well. Currently the Creative Director and all facilitators are women. However, there have been male facilitators in the past and activities at this level are based on aptitude and interest rather than gender.

As there are participants from various ethnic and national origins in the project,¹⁶ there is no one group particularly being targeted by the project or the products being created. Products created by other projects (discussed later) often represent a particular ethnic group.¹⁷ The linguistic and ethnic diversity represented at Boitumelo Project makes communication and training challenging at times but the commitment to empowering people from different backgrounds is maintained. The commitment to diversity means that the project reflects the diverse landscape and populations of Hillbrow, Soweto, and Johannesburg in general. To a certain degree, this diversity is reflected in the products, with a wide variety autobiographical, social, historical, biblical, geographical, national, cultural, topical, environmental, and linguistically located pieces coming out of the project. This array of products is in stark contrast to the focused, limited style of products coming out of other projects.

It is important to note that the way a project is designed and run can facilitate empowerment but the way the participants choose to interact and participate in the project provide a vital piece of the empowerment puzzle. The project can be structured to maximize empowerment but the attitude and energy of participants strongly affects their level of engagement, the amount of benefit they stand to gain, and how empowered they

¹⁶ Unfortunately, no official data is kept on how many non-South Africans participate in Boitumelo. This is because funding that comes from the South African government is only supposed to fund documented South Africans. By not specifically asking for documentation of nationality, Boitumelo officially assumes everyone is a registered South African resident. However, I estimate from my eight weeks at Boitumelo that about 70% of the participants are non-South African. I spoke to participants from as far afield as Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique, the DRC, and Rwanda.

¹⁷ For example, Tambani focuses on Venda speakers in Limpopo and Kaross focuses on the Shangaan. See Table 3 for more details.

are able to become. As the Creative Director of Boitumelo Project explained “Giving aid creates a culture of dependency and a culture of poverty.” (Personal interview, February 2010) She also mentioned the example of two women who had migrated to Johannesburg after spending time in refugee camps in the DRC and Rwanda. They joined the project at roughly the same time and had completely different attitudes: one using the project to improve her skills, gain self-confidence, and improve both psychological and economic empowerment; the other woman interpreting the project as a place for “charity and hand-outs” rather than hard work. (Personal interview, February 2010)

During one of my visits to the Soweto project in February 2010, participants stood up in front of each other and spoke about their latest embroidery pieces, discussing concepts of fairness in society. They openly discussed their motivations and what the pictures meant socially and personally. Many participants were shy and it took a lot of self-confidence to stand up and discuss their creations in front of the rest of the group and a complete stranger (me, the researcher). In this way, the ongoing role of the project in putting participants in challenging situations and improving their self-confidence became evident.

There are structural elements to empowerment and disempowerment that are directly related to the project and its location. Intermittent Internet connectivity, periodic electricity cuts, expensive and/or inadequate transportation facilities to the area, and the security challenges of Hillbrow (and to a lesser extent, Soweto) all conspire to make the locations difficult to access and problematic in terms of project implementation. These are partly barriers to participants fulfilling their potential and these could be considered disempowering to a certain extent. However, the adaptation and commitment to continue with the project despite challenges could be seen as empowering as people are thinking creatively about ways to continue, as well as activating power *within* themselves and *with* others in order to overcome the barriers.

Social issues workshops are key elements of empowerment within Boitumelo. These are not, as Freire (1970) would term it, representative of “banking education.” Freire explained that this form of education is an instrument of oppression because

teachers make “deposits” of information students receive, memorize, and repeat. This process makes students work to store information deposits rather than helping them develop a critical consciousness. Instead, the dialogical workshops at Boitumelo are very much in the mould of Freire’s (1970, pp. 80-81) posed alternative form of education: problem-posing education. As one Soweto participant in her 60s explained, “Joining is important. I got what I need: sharing. It reminds me I am not alone.” I argue that there is an element of problem-posing and problem-solving education here. Another Soweto participant in her 50s noted the importance of active and mutual engagement within Boitumelo. She said she likes the opportunity to “Share with other people, to teach each other... The progress I see makes me feel good.” In this way there is not the one-way depository education but rather a dialogical form of education that counters oppression.

The role of the workshop facilitator is specifically designed to present material to participants for their consideration, but there is a definite awareness that facilitators are open to and encouraged to reconsider their earlier considerations as the students express their own. In this way there is neither oppression nor submission; “there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know.” (Freire, 1970, p. 90)

In addition to the capacity building specifically engaged in at Boitumelo (including sewing, embroidery, appliqué, mosaic, etc.), the project acts as an information exchange and networking opportunity. Boitumelo participants are also able to access other programs for skills training at Outreach Foundation such as budgeting and computer skills. Participants are also linked into external opportunities for training, including business development, product conceptualization, marketing, and arts skills not offered at Boitumelo or Outreach (e.g. painting and sculpting). In this way, Boitumelo works to equip participants with skills and networks beyond the immediate scope of its own workshops, classes, and on-site interactions. Participants are also encouraged to study for their National Qualifications Framework (NQF)¹⁸ for education and training, which has the potential to link them into future employment opportunities. Boitumelo

¹⁸ The National Qualifications Framework awards registered learners with national accreditation based on their skills and knowledge. There are eight NQF levels divided into three categories: general education and training, further education and training, and higher education and training.

does not, however, provide this training directly. Instead, there is more of a facilitative and supportive framework for participants pursuing the NQF and other skill building opportunities. As the Creative Director explains,

Curriculum is flexible in terms of what they can learn and how to learn it. If people want to learn something we cannot offer, we try to shift people into other programs. We try to get people into other programs that we know about. Usually that takes time and you have to be tenacious to get them into other programs.

Personal interview, March 2010

Management Attitudes to Power

To a large extent, the way that Boitumelo operates is due to the open, participatory attitude of the Creative Director, Erica Lüttich. Of course, the precise implementation styles and details are decided in consultation with facilitators and participants as part of a fluid and organic process. However, some key attitudes to power can be traced back to the Creative Director. For example, that Boitumelo does not focus on economic forms of empowerment is a key decision on the part of the Creative Director. Her focus is healing through skills transfer and the personal validity that comes with successfully learning new skills, interacting with new people, and finding a sense of self-worth in a public space. As she explains,

There is a lot of fear in being creative so participants have to overcome their major fears. People need to be pushed to try other things... Sometimes it is just about exploration, the creative development, and having another skill that gives people a bit of confidence.

Personal interview, March 2010

A manifestation of this self-confidence is often the courage to approach the Creative Director and Outreach Foundation management. To begin with the participants usually interact mainly with each other and to a lesser extent with the facilitators who attempt to help them feel at ease in the new environment. The Creative Director tends to manage from afar at the beginning of a new intake. However, when students gain the confidence to approach her, she considers it a marker of success: “It means we have hit a threshold of success with students; when they can approach the symbols of power and authority in the project.” (Personal interview, March 2010)

As a result of the focus on individual and collective empowerment, the income generation aspect of Boitumelo is very much a secondary focus and concern. Many so-called empowerment projects are started because of a desire to improve the economic situation of people in poverty. While Boitumelo is not insensitive to issues of poverty in Hillbrow, Soweto, and Diepsloot, the need that the project primarily seeks to fill is healing, social transformation, and a sense of personal empowerment. Boitumelo Project does not provide enough regular income to sustain the participants and their households but it does provide much-needed supplemental income.

It is interesting to note that the participants do not really focus on the money either. It is definitely important to them and they depend on it to a certain extent as supplementary income but they talk about other aspects of the project first.¹⁹ For example, one man talks about the project as a kind of stepping-stone to open doors to other things in his life. (Boitumelo Hillbrow Participant, mid-20s) The focus on healing and individual empowerment as primary at Boitumelo is largely thanks to the Creative Director but also follows from the healing mission of Outreach Foundation, which is embodied in the following comment from the Outreach Foundation Counselor:

The ability to teach people a skill, especially the skill of sharing their emotions and pain through handwork brings comfort but most of all healing in their deepest moments of vulnerability. Viva Boitumelo Viva.

Facilitators' Opinions on Power

In total I interviewed three facilitators: two in Hillbrow and one in Soweto. Each facilitator moved from being a program participant into the role of facilitator. Facilitators are particularly encouraged to take their National Qualifications (which include equivalency with the national matric exam), often working as facilitators while studying to develop themselves personally. Interestingly, while the facilitator position naturally involves power over designing the curriculum and how it is used, facilitators themselves did not see themselves as more powerful or important than other participants. They did, however, note that they had more responsibility to help participants develop their own

¹⁹ This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

sense of self-worth: “Being a facilitator is not about teaching; it is about sharing and helping people.” (Senior Facilitator A, personal interview, March 2010)

While not indicating perceived changes in power over people, facilitators did feel like they had more self-confidence and *power-within*. This may be related to the salary that facilitators receive, which places them in a more secure economic position than other participants, but was never mentioned by facilitators or other participants. One facilitator in particular focused on non-economic changes that she has noticed in her life since becoming a facilitator. She used to be shy and did not talk to people but now she says, “I talk too much. I know how to share. I know how to talk to everyone. Everyone is encouraging me at home.” (Senior Facilitator A, personal interview, March 2010) She experienced a profound change in levels of self-confidence and an improvement in relations at home since joining the project and becoming a facilitator. This can be interpreted as positive changes in individual and collective empowerment. She also says that she is respected more in the community: “I am appreciated a lot. People call me. I am famous here.” (Senior Facilitator A, personal interview, March 2010)

Facilitators also perceive themselves as having heightened responsibility in terms of understanding social issues that may then be discussed informally at the project or may form the subject of workshops. One facilitator in Hillbrow volunteered at a police station to learn more about xenophobia and social issues: “The xenophobia project was difficult. There are many immigrants and big fear. I volunteered at a police station and did xenophobia studies. This made the xenophobia workshop a success.” (Senior Facilitator B, personal interview, March 2010)

Realities of Power within Outreach Foundation

While the ethos of active empowerment on psychological and social levels is evident within Boitumelo Project, this is not necessarily replicated within the wider Outreach Foundation. Boitumelo is very committed to the ‘open door’ model of communication and a relatively flat structure of management where all participants and facilitators have a say in decisions that are made. This structure and high level of communication is seen to contribute to the empowerment of project participants because

they are expected to participate actively in decisions, enhancing their roles and responsibilities within the project and sense of self-worth on a wider scale. To a certain extent, this empowerment is undermined on a wider organization level. There appears to be differences between mission and implementation within Boitumelo as compared with Outreach Foundation. For example, large-scale budgeting and fundraising is conducted at an organizational level, restricting invaluable fundraising opportunities and involvement at the project level. It should be noted that officially Outreach Foundation is committed to a flat structure as opposed to hierarchy. (Appelo, personal interview, March 2010) The Chairperson also emphasizes a hands-off approach to daily project implementation. Having said this, the Outreach Foundation Manager expressed an interest in being more involved with the projects, creating policies, monitoring budgets, and training facilitators. (Kibare, personal interview, March 2010) This indicates a contradiction in attitudes to power and project implementation approaches.

After Boitumelo

In the nine years of operation, many people have joined and left the project. Many people have stayed on, with a few people still there after eight years or more. Particular stories of success remain, however, including two facilitators which moved on from the project and have been quite successful professionally. One is working for a sewing shop in a large shopping mall to the East of Johannesburg and the other is running her own small business that is linked to sewing. Both of them were excellent teachers but have not continued with teaching or training. The Creative Director of Boitumelo Projects encourages facilitators to move on and do other things, considering it a sign of success that they have learned from the project and their experiences but are not dependent on it. Also, when facilitators move to other things, it affords new facilitators the chance to grow within the organization. The long-term plan for the organization is for more people to have facilitator experience, be valued in other realms, and so manage to be afforded wider opportunities. (Creative Director, personal interview, February 2010)

Participants also go on to other jobs, some connected with arts and others not. Many continue to come to Boitumelo even after they find more sustainable forms of

income generation—participating only in Saturday classes. As one Hillbrow facilitator explained about participation in Boitumelo: “Lives change. People learn languages. Another guy became an entrepreneur...Students go on to other jobs when they are finished. One student opened his own shop.” (Senior Facilitator A, personal interview, March 2010) Another facilitator mentioned, “Three students opened their own projects. Two others opened something in Pietermaritzburg.” (Senior Facilitator B, personal interview, March 2010) These stories of success are anecdotal and mainly come from the Creative Director and facilitators because they form the institutional memories of Boitumelo. As such, there is likely to be some positive bias because they are likely to better remember success stories; also people who have found success (however it is measured) are likely to stay in touch to communicate the good news. However, these should be taken as possible indications of the positive impact of Boitumelo in the long term. Further research on this topic should make it a priority to find out what ‘program graduates’ go on to do and how they feel their Boitumelo experience affected their lives.

Not only do participants gain a sense of independence and sustainability of lifestyle and skills apart from Boitumelo, the project itself has demonstrated long-term sustainability. Boitumelo has been through changes of staff at management level as well as various iterations of facilitators and two Creative Directors. This is not to say there is high staff turnover but in the nine-year lifespan of Boitumelo there have naturally been some staff changes and yet the project itself has survived and grown, indicating an underlying sustainability and strength of concept.

Other Projects

While interviews with people involved with Boitumelo Project formed the bulk of my primary research, I did conduct some interviews with other arts-and-crafts projects in Johannesburg. The results of these interviews are discussed briefly below and summarized in Table 3. They do not form the basis for case study comparisons but do give an idea of attitudes to power and empowerment in other projects. It is hoped that the limited contrasts and comparisons that can reasonably be drawn help to further elucidate the attitudes and approaches to empowerment embodied by Boitumelo Project.

There are many different types of arts-crafts-based projects (Tambani, Kaross, HotBag, etc.) in South Africa and other countries but each has a different plan and objectives from Boitumelo, and therefore different impacts in terms of empowerment.²⁰ Three of these projects will be examined in brief below to provide a rudimentary but important basis for comparison with Boitumelo.

Tambani Project

Tambani Project is a job creation and income generation initiative started by Ina le Roux. She is based in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg but all of her embroiders are located in Venda, Northern Province, a seven-hour bus-ride away. A White Afrikaaner, Ina le Roux lectured in Afrikaans literature at the University of Venda. In the early 1990s, she began to collect *ngano* (folk tales) of the Venda people and has since started the Tambani Embroidery Project. The project aims to continue the Venda oral tradition by making the folk tales available to a wider audience in embroidered form. At the same time, the project provides employment for women (and some men) who live in economically impoverished rural Venda areas of Northern Province.

Within this model, project director Ina le Roux designs the products. The designs are silkscreened onto cloths that are then embroidered by women in Venda. Participants are not turned away from the project, adopting an attitude of broad inclusion similar to that of Boitumelo Sewing Project: if people are interested and want to learn how to embroider cloths, they are welcomed and able to join the cloth team.

Unlike Boitumelo Sewing Project, the focus of Tambani is job creation and income generation. To a secondary degree, there is an interest in preserving Venda folktales in art form, but the overarching objective of the for-profit venture is to generate income for (mainly) women in rural Venda. An example of Tambani embroidery can be

²⁰ In addition to the projects examined here, the researcher also talked to the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) which supports a range of capacity-building initiatives in the areas of education, health, economic justice, human rights, and information technology. However, as OSISA works primarily in Southern African countries around South Africa and does not lead craft-based initiatives, it was not included in this comparative analysis.

seen in Appendix H, Figure 20. This piece depicts the Venda folktale of The Victorious Woman. While each piece is individually hand-sewn, the designs are standardized and silk-screened onto cloths that are distributed to the embroiderers. Cloth, appliqué and thread colors are chosen in advance, which ensures coherence of color themes but takes the majority of the creative power away from the crafters themselves.

Interestingly, the main market for the products is international: primarily quilters in the U.S. and Germany. Also, while job creation and income generation are the key objectives of the project, Ina le Roux notes that having deadlines and regular work assignments has instilled new concepts of time, schedules, and deadlines in project participants. (Personal interview, January, 2010)

There are forty embroiderers spread over two villages in rural Venda. Two supervisors monitor quality and progress as well as controlling the allocation of cloth and cotton to the women. Initially participants are asked to complete five pieces of cloth. If they do that successfully they complete about 200 pieces a year, each of which they are paid for on a set rate basis. Regardless of whether Ina le Roux sells the pieces, she pays the women out for them when they are collected on a monthly basis. In this way the women receive a steady income and the risk, stock management, and sales pressure are borne by project founder and director Ina le Roux.

Finally, while the project is run on a for-profit business basis, the fact that it centers on one immediate buyer (Ina le Roux) who is then responsible for finding customers locally and internationally means that the long-term sustainability of the project is in question. Without the link to Ina, the women (and men) in Venda would have no materials, no designs, and buyer for their products. As such, the empowerment identified is of a limited basis. The crafters have developed embroidery skills but do not create their own designs, purchase product materials, consider end products, set prices for their goods, or have any involvement in locating other buyers. They are wholly dependent on Ina le Roux and Tambani, reflecting a relatively short-term form of immediate and limited empowerment. Trips to source international buyers are 80% funded by the South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) as part of its export

promotion initiatives. However, without this funding, it is unlikely that the project would be able to adequately and efficiently be able to access international markets, again bringing into question the sustainability and empowerment impact of Tambani. (Personal interview, January 2010)

While Tambani focuses on emphasizing, respecting, and documenting Venda culture, the project participants have very little to no power in terms of the creative process, the design details, the folklore being highlighted, prices being set, or the markets being targeted. As such, this is mainly a project highlighting economic empowerment on a functional scale but lacks the personal and collective forms of empowerment targeted by Boitumelo Project.

HotBag Project

The HotBag Project is also a job creation and income generation project started by British South African Wendy Chandler in the suburbs of Northern Johannesburg. The project was conceptualized in late 2000 and after extensive research and product trials the project now has a range of three different sizes of HotBags. A photo of the small size HotBag can be seen in Appendix H, Figure 21.

The concept uses recycled materials to make energy-saving, timesaving, smokeless cooking bags. The product works in much the same way as a campers' space blanket, directing heat inwards and retaining it. When food such as rice, stews, or even chicken is brought to boiling point, the heat source can be turned off or used for other purposes. The pot is then placed inside the HotBag and wrapped up tightly. The heat is directed inward, creating thermal and convection heat which continues cooking the food for 2-3 hours in a completely contained, safe container requiring no extra energy or attention.

The HotBag Project targets low-income women, teaching them how to sew the bags and then pays them for each bag they produce. There are a number of different aspects to the project, which aims to create jobs for low-income women as well as helping women save time in the kitchen, save money by using less energy for cooking,

and reduce respiratory health problems by minimizing time spent over fires and in poorly ventilated kitchens.

The concept involves cooking with retained heat and was originally intended for low-income women. Some women have taken to the idea, explaining, “The HotBag is my friend. It is for a lifetime. I watch how many units²¹ of electricity I save.” (Dudu, personal interview, March 2010) However, overall the product has mainly been successful with campers, hikers, and overseas customers because many low-income local women do not accept the retained-heat cooking concept. In particular, there is resistance from husbands, one of whom insisted, “I do not want my food cooked like that. I want it cooked properly.” (Wendy Chandler, personal interview, March 2010) Attitudinal issues concerning the use of fire and modern electricity rather than retained heat present barriers to the adoption of the new technology. Interesting as well was the exertion of male power over the woman’s traditional locus of power: the kitchen.

In terms of design and product control, the power is entirely located with the Project Director, Wendy Chandler. She creates the designs for the HotBags and has hired and trained three women to sew them. She provides the materials and pays the women per item they produce. The Project Director is responsible for marketing the products, selling to customers, and deciding final sale prices. This locates risk-taking and stock management, as well as all the decision-making power in the hands of the Project Director. As a for-profit endeavor, the HotBag Project clearly focuses on rudimentary forms of economic empowerment for project participants.

Kaross

Kaross is a very economically successful embroidery initiative that was founded by a visual artist and five Shangaan embroiderers in 1989. The project was started as a way to give rural Shangaan people economic income based on the traditional stories and designs of Shangaan culture. While based on Shangaan culture, the products are

²¹ This refers to a pre-paid card system of electricity delivery common in rural areas of South Africa. An electricity monitor on the wall shows clearly how many units are being used when the prepaid card is inserted. When the card is removed, no electricity can be used.

specifically designed with the modern market in mind. It was originally set up as a job creation scheme for mainly rural women and the economic empowerment aspect of the project is still central. There has emerged, however, a focus on cultural awareness and pride, facilitating both individual and social empowerment. It remains, however, secondary to the economic focus. Products range from wall hangings, bedlinen, cushion covers, bags, to fashion accessories and can be categorized as high-end products for the affluent local and international markets. Kaross appears to be moving from economic empowerment to include individual and collective forms of empowerment. This transition could not be verified as the project area was too far from Johannesburg to conduct first-hand research.

Kaross, Tambani, and HotBag are all run based on profit-making business models. Of the three, Kaross is by far the most economically successful, with Tambani currently presenting a sustainable model in the short term, and HotBag in very early stages of potentially sustainable business success. Boitumelo Sewing Project, on the other hand, is located within a non-profit environment and managed very much on a non-profit model. This gives the project the luxury of not having to focus on economic sustainability and profitability, affording it the space to focus on other forms of empowerment.²²

Other Crafters Interviewed

I informally interviewed three other crafters that were not linked to any larger arts-and-craft project. Two were from Zimbabwe and were selling their products (embroidery and hand-made wire-art cards) informally on the streets of northern Johannesburg. The Zimbabwean woman learned embroidery from her mother while the man attended an NGO-funded art program to learn how to make and market products from recycled goods. They both focused on economic aspects of their crafts, producing according to market demand. They also preferred to work independently rather than within a larger organization. Both crafters indicated that their primary purpose in creating products was for sale and that they tried to create designs that the customers would buy.

²² Table 3 presents an overview of the projects.

They did feel they had a lot of power over their lives and indicated this was directly linked to the income received.

I also interviewed a female South African beader. She learned to bead from her mother and continued to make the products with the women and men of her family in Mpumalanga as a collective effort. She gained invaluable support and self-confidence from this support, indicating a heightened sense of power through her collaboration with her family members. She was responsible for selling the products in the semi-informal economy (she has a stall at one of the most popular weekend markets in Johannesburg: the Rosebank Rooftop Market). She indicated that she “felt good” because she could make money and share creative experiences with her family.

Conclusions

This chapter discussed Boitumelo Sewing Project, its attitudes to and engagement with power, as well as manifestations of empowerment within and between participants. Preliminary conclusions, based on eight weeks of participant observation are that the project has important impacts in terms of individual and collective empowerment as the project focuses on individual healing through arts skills transfer and encouraging people to positively interact in a safe communal space. I argue that Boitumelo Project brings people out of their marginalized and isolated positions in society into in a safe space to engage and develop strength and solidarity with people from different cultural, ethnic, educational, and experiential backgrounds. This is epitomized by the Soweto participant in her 60s who noted that “Joining is important...It reminds me I am not alone.” These conclusions are based on informal discussions with project participants and facilitators, interviews with management, and general participant observation but they are echoed by Zaman (1999, p. 159), who argues that programs like these provide “certain kinds of strength and solidarity across class and gender lines.”

Table 3: Comparison of Projects Examined

Project Name	Boitumelo Sewing Project Hillbrow	Boitumelo Sewing Project Soweto	Tambani	HotBag Project	Kaross
Main Location	Hillbrow, Johannesburg	Jabavu, Soweto	Limpopo Province	Hyde Park, Johannesburg	Letsitele/ Giyani area, Limpopo Province
Urban/Rural Peri-Urban	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Participants	+/- 100	+/- 20	+/- 65	+/- 5	1,000 +
Participants	Women (and men)	Women	Women (and men)	Women	Designers are men; embroiderers are mainly women
Decision-Making Locus	Participants	Participants	Project Director	Project Director	Directors
Designs By	Participants	Participants	Project Director	Project Director	Three local male artists
Designs Based On...	Social and personal issues	Social and personal issues	Venda folk tales	Retained heat cooking	Shangaan culture
Market	Local and international	Local	International	International	International and local
Product Profits Go To...	Participants	Participants	Participants	Business	Business
Organization Form	Non-profit	Non-profit	For-profit	For-profit	For-profit
Project Promotes...	Individual and social healing through art; income	Individual and social healing through art; income	Venda culture; job creation	Time-saving, low-emissions cooking; job creation	Job creation; quality art; Shangaan culture
Main Forms of Empowerment Identified	Individual, social, economic	Individual, social, economic	Economic	Economic	Economic

Boitumelo Project aims to enhance individual abilities and remove individual constraints—a very personalized form of empowerment (Stern, et. al. 2006). Some societal constraints are affected, with some attempt to include women in networking, other skills training, and secondary attempts to help them generate some income. However, preliminary observations indicate that the focus is on empowering individuals without adapting social context; a drawback perhaps, of the program.

I also conducted a brief survey of other arts-and-craft programs to attempt to discover whether they were interested in or focused on empowerment. My preliminary conclusions, admitting that more research needs to be done, is that Tambani, HotBag, and Kaross, are focused on the economic benefit of their programs, highlighting the job creation and income generation aspects of their activities. This is in sharp contrast with Boitumelo which, while encompassing economic benefit, chooses to focus on creative process and outcomes on individual and community levels. This results in project activities which prioritize individual and community empowerment over economic gain.

Specifically with respect to lack of faith and trust in society—identified by Taylor (1995) as a key barrier to social reconstruction, I argue that Boitumelo is attempting to build the trust and faith of program participants in order to begin to address social issues including various forms of gender and poverty, violence, inequality, and the HIV epidemic on a personal and then community level. As such, I postulate that Boitumelo Project contributes to empowerment by: providing safe social spaces where participants can develop an independent sense of worth; providing positive role models; and providing a communication and information exchange network. These and other manifestations of empowerment will be examined more in the next chapter through interpretation of the results from semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants of Boitumelo Project in Hillbrow and Soweto locations.

CHAPTER V

BOITUMELO AND FORMS OF EMPOWERMENT

If you are not a learner, how can you do anything?

Boitumelo participant, Soweto, 60s

In this chapter, I explore three distinct forms of empowerment identified during interviews conducted with participants of Boitumelo Project in Hillbrow, Johannesburg and Jabavu, Soweto during February and March 2010. In the previous chapter, I described information gained in conversations with Boitumelo project management and senior facilitators as well as from participant observation. I also briefly examined information gathered by interviewing the management of other projects (Tambani and HotBag) and self-employed crafters not formally participating in any projects. This chapter, however, focuses on the interpreted results of semi-structured interviews conducted with Boitumelo Hillbrow and Boitumelo Soweto project participants. I then locate the results within the larger context of empowerment theory, the organizational mission of empowerment, and participants' perceptions of the project's empowering impacts.

This chapter focuses specifically on the data gathered from semi-structured interviews I conducted with 11 participants in Boitumelo Project Hillbrow and 11 participants in Boitumelo Project Soweto. The majority of participants were women, with only three of the 22 participants interviewed being male (14% of the sample). However it should be noted that the head of the Outreach Foundation and all board members are male, reiterating the male-dominated nature of the organizational power structure.

Interviews at Boitumelo Project Hillbrow, Johannesburg

The 11 participants that I interviewed had been involved with Boitumelo for anywhere from a month up to five years, with the simple average for the sample at 27 months. Participants visit the project between one and five times a week, with the sample averaging four times a week. Commuting times to the project range between two and ninety minutes, with the average at just over half an hour. Most participants walk to the project, with those living very far away being forced to take taxis, buses, and even a train to the project.

When asked to explain why they first joined Boitumelo Project, most participants answered equally that they were interested in the computer classes going on at the center, wanted to keep busy because they had nothing else to do, and wanted to learn something about art skills. Two participants also identified the desire for a safe space amidst the busyness and danger of the city. One man explained that “Life in a high density, high rise is disturbing and distracting. I needed some peace.” Another man told me “I came here to avoid bad things outside. I wanted to be involved to stop doing wrong things. When I am here, it is like I am safe. I don't think too much.”

Participants unanimously judged the training to be good and said that Boitumelo met or exceeded their expectations. Participants identified various skills learned as part of the training including drawing, design, new stitches, embroidery, use of the sewing machine, discipline, paper maché, fabric painting, tie-dye, weaving, beading, knitting, mosaic, and making skirts.

Interviews at Boitumelo Project Jabavu, Soweto

I interviewed 11 participants at the Boitumelo Project Soweto location. Participants had been attending the project for anything from one to 36 months, with the average at 18 months. Unlike the Hillbrow location, the Soweto location only operates one day a week, which is when participants attend. It takes participants anything between five minutes and one hour to get to the project, with the average time taken at 30 minutes. All participants walk to the project, reflecting at once the remote nature and limited sphere of influence of the project.

Explaining why they first joined Boitumelo, most people indicated an interest in keeping busy. This does not necessarily mean that participants were not interested in earning an income or that they did not need to consider income as a factor. It is probably more likely that they were receiving money from elsewhere and managing to survive financially, and that the boredom of being at home every day was uppermost in their minds when considering whether or not to become involved in the project. One woman in her 40s from Soweto explained, “I wanted to keep busy; I didn’t want to stay at home.” Expectations focused on gaining new skills and experience, with others indicating a hope for having something to do. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the project met their expectations and that the training process was good. Participants indicated they did not want to change anything but some voiced a desire to have more space and be able to come to the project more than one day a week (as is presently the case).

Table 4: Overview of Boitumelo Project Responses

Location	Original Intent (# of people)	Expectations (# of people)
Hillbrow	Interested in computer classes: 3 Wanted to be busy: 3 For the art: 3 Wanted the peace: 2	To get skills: 6 To meet people: 2 To be busy: 2 To be safe: 1
Soweto	To keep busy: 5 To be with friends/people: 4 Like sewing and people: 1 Joining things is important: 1	To get skills: 5 To be busy: 4 To meet people: 1 To get money: 1
Total	22 participants interviewed	22 participants interviewed

When considering the project participants’ original reasons for joining Boitumelo project, Hillbrow participants had a wide range of relatively evenly dispersed reasons including a desire to take other classes, be busy, and gain art skills. Soweto participants, however, focused far more on the desire to keep busy and spend time with people. These

results reflect, to a certain extent, the divergent context of each project. Hillbrow is an urban location with many options for other classes, occupations, and diversions. The Jabavu, Soweto area is more rural and does not offer many choices for training or diversions, many people being forced to travel to more urban areas for jobs, entertainment and services.

In both locations, the largest portion of respondents expected to gain skills at Boitumelo, with others hoping to be busy and meet people. Only one respondent voiced a concern with safety, likely a reflection of insecure conditions in Hillbrow. Only one person indicated an expectation of access to financial resources, reflecting the limited employment opportunities in Soweto as well as Boitumelo's income generation aspect.

With reference to Table 4, it should be noted that the interpretations of project participants' responses regarding original intent in joining and program expectations are more complex than may initially appear. Most people have more than one reason for their actions, and when investigating these on a deep level, intentions and expectations reveal a complex range of rationales. The results in Table 4 cannot adequately represent that complexity but do give an overview of people's own perceptions of why they first came to Boitumelo and what they expected to gain from their involvement with the project. Analysis of the 22 interviews revealed that project participants identified three broad forms of empowerment: individual, collective, and economic. These are discussed below.

Boitumelo Project and Individual Empowerment

Table 5 shows an overview of interpreted data from the 22 semi-structured interviews conducted in Hillbrow and Soweto. I interpreted a wide variety of statements that relate to issues of individual empowerment: Participants indicated feeling healed, having more confidence, being able to do new things, feeling freer, having more pride and independence, feeling psychologically safer and happier, and having more personal power over their own lives. These statements can be considered indicators of participants having more *power-within* and *power-to* achieve things—the key to individual empowerment.

In terms of individual empowerment, more people highlighted the skill-gaining aspect of Boitumelo than any other (73%).” One Hillbrow participant in her 30s focused on the personally liberating aspect of skill-building, saying, “I am changed...I am learning Venda. I embroider stuff myself. People don’t believe it. I feel free.” Of course, it is possible to interpret the gaining of new skills and interest in doing new things in economic terms. However, participants were adamant that they were interested in being busy because boredom caused them depression and unhappiness. They also explained that they enjoyed being out of their houses and sharing with other people—that this gave them a sense of personal power and fulfillment. This is demonstrated by the response of a Hillbrow participant in her 30s: “I have no time for being at home and thinking. At home I sleep all day. I enjoy being at Boitumelo. I tell people things; we share problems. I am relieved. Boitumelo is my home.” A participant in her 60s from Soweto voiced a similar sentiment, noting the importance of being busy not for economic terms but in order to keep her mind off daily life: “I can keep myself busy and not think too much.”

Slightly fewer respondents talked about the how Boitumelo had increased their levels of happiness (68%) and personal power (64%). A Hillbrow participant in her 40s explained “I feel so happy. I can do something with my hands. I am going to achieve a lot.” A learner in her 60s from Soweto explained, “I feel happy when I think I must wake and wash and look nice on Wednesday.”

Other key areas of individual empowerment that I identified include people feeling an increased sense of personal pride and those feeling “healed” by the project (45% each). I identified various forms of healing in connection with Boitumelo Project: involving a physical safe space, a mental safe space for sharing, and a place to be productive and heal feelings of low self-esteem. In terms of identifying Boitumelo as a physical safe space, one learner in her 30s from Zimbabwe who participates in Boitumelo Project Hillbrow explained: “Even if your husband hits you at home, you can come here and know how to solve your problems.” Another Hillbrow participant, also in her 30s, focused more on the mental safety and support she experienced: “I feel strong. I feel healed. This is better than a doctor. This is like a hospital for me. It has healed me.” A

Soweto participant in her 50s echoed this sentiment, saying, “Boitumelo healed my heart.” Another Soweto learner, in her 60s, emphasized the benefit of being engaged in productive activities, saying “This sewing is like therapy for me.” While being extremely difficult to measure, it is clear that the healing aspects of Boitumelo were very important for participants.

Table 5: Responses indicating Individual Empowerment

Location	Healing (# people)	Healing (# mentions)	Confidence-building (#people)	Confidence-building (#mentions)	Ability to do new things (# people)	Ability to do new things (# mentions)
Hillbrow	3	6	3	3	11	13
Soweto	7	8	4	4	5	5
Total	10	14	7	7	16	18

Location	Freeing (# people)	Freeing (# mentions)	Pride (# people)	Pride (# mentions)	Independence (# people)	Independence (#mentions)
Hillbrow	6	9	6	7	6	6
Soweto	3	4	4	4	2	2
Total	9	13	10	11	8	8

Location	Psychological safety (# people)	Psychological safety (# mentions)	Happier (# people)	Happier (# mentions)	Personal power (# people)	Personal power (# mentions)
Hillbrow	5	6	6	8	8	10
Soweto	4	4	9	12	4	4
Total	9	10	15	20	14	14

Differentiating between locations also reveals interesting trends. More participants from Soweto than Hillbrow mentioned the healing, confidence-building, and happiness aspects of Boitumelo. Hillbrow learners, on the other hand, tended to focus on the skill-building, freedom, pride, independence, and personal empowerment aspects of their experience at Boitumelo. A Hillbrow-based participant in her 40s emphasized how overcoming difficulties at Boitumelo can lead to a place of strength:

I went to sell for the first time on the weekend and it was a horrible experience...I was nervous and worried and stressed and made mistakes. But I learned a lot. It was good at the end. It made me stronger.

Boitumelo Project and Collective Empowerment

A woman alone is powerless to change her situation, the only thing she can do is scream. Women together, however, can change the situation.

Touwen, *Gender and development in Zambia*, 1996, p. 194

Interview responses indicating collective forms of empowerment can be seen in Table 6. These included increased abilities to interact with others, engage in something outside the house, find safety with others, collaborate on projects, as well as indication of increased esteem and respect from others.²³

All but three respondents credited Boitumelo with heightened levels of respect that they feel from others, be they family, friends, or members of their community (86%). A Soweto woman in her 60s noted “This is a nice place to be: lots of respect, laughing, and chatting. Here is real respect” A Hillbrow participant in her 40s echoed the sentiment, explaining, “I have a lot more respect from friends and family. I have homemade dresses when I go home. I am very popular.” This comment reflects increased respect and feelings of self-esteem as a result of other people’s changed attitudes.

²³ Increased “esteem from others” involves participants feeling good internally as a result of others’ changed attitudes and perceptions. Increased “respect by others” is a more externally located sensation whereby others indicate heightened respect for participants as a result of their engagement with Boitumelo.

Table 6: Responses indicating Collective Empowerment

Location	Ability to interact (# people)	Ability to interact (# mentions)	Esteem from others (# people)	Esteem from others (# mentions)	Engagement outside the house (# people)	Engagement outside the house (# mentions)
Hillbrow	8	9	4	6	7	7
Soweto	5	7	9	10	6	7
Total	13	16	13	16	13	14

Location	Safe space with others (# people)	Safe space with others (# mentions)	Collaboration with others (# people)	Collaboration with others (# mentions)	Respected by others (# people)	Respected by others (# mentions)
Hillbrow	7	10	8	8	8	8
Soweto	4	5	3	4	11	12
Total	11	15	11	12	19	20

More than half of respondents (59%) mentioned that Boitumelo had increased their ability to interact with others, engage outside of the home, and gain esteem from others. A woman in her 60s from Soweto explained simply and succinctly: “Staying at home and doing nothing is not good. Training and being with other people is good.” A Hillbrow learner in her 30s focused on the self-esteem that comes from interacting with people in a safe space: “Ladies make me feel good. They say to be free and put it as it comes to you. There is no discrimination here. There is talking, drawing, sharing. I have seen some ladies changed in three weeks.”

Participants in Hillbrow tended to focus on the interaction, collaboration, outside engagement, and safety aspect of Boitumelo. A twenty-something male participant based in Hillbrow emphasized the importance the Boitumelo community to him: “I am far away from home but here I am safe. They help me, they teach me. Life is better here.” Soweto respondents emphasized esteem and respect, beautifully expressed by a participant in her 60s: “On Wednesdays, people think I am important and going to town.”

As with statements reflecting the individual empowerment and healing, participants also explained the healing importance of Boitumelo in a collective way. A Soweto woman in her 60s explained: “When you are depressed you are short-tempered. But it is a blessing to be involved here. We feel good with this project.” Another Soweto participant, this time in her 40s, also explained that the project is a way for her to relieve her stress: “I don’t want to stay at home and be stressed. I am enjoying this place. We are treated in the right way and feel good.”

Boitumelo Project and Economic Empowerment

The final form of empowerment identified in the responses to the semi-structured interviews involves money and has been interpreted as being linked to economic empowerment. Economic empowerment can be explained as feeling of freedom and expansion of choice that comes with increased access to financial resources. It is important to grasp from the outset that the response rates for this form of empowerment were notably lower than for individual or collective forms of empowerment. Individual empowerment response rates ranged from seven to 16 people per response (Table 5). Collective empowerment response rates were even higher, with between 11 and 19 people responding in each category identified (Table 7). Economic empowerment, however, only garnered between five and 11 people who indicated economic-related changes either current or potential as part of their Boitumelo experience. This is a maximum response rate of only 50%. Having noted in previous chapters that economic empowerment is not the perceived focus or objective of Boitumelo Project, these response rates may not be surprising. It is interesting to note, however, that regardless of

the management's intentions and perceptions, participants themselves are responding more concerning other forms of empowerment.

Participants specifically mentioned increased access to money since joining Boitumelo, which considering the income generation aspect of the project, is not surprising. A full 50% of participants specifically mentioned the importance of the income, while 41% indicated the income was important for helping to provide for themselves and their families. A 45-year-old woman from Soweto explained that the project gives her "love and more bread for the home." A Hillbrow participant in her 30s shared her feelings on the subject saying, "My kids are not going hungry. Even if it is not enough, it is something." Another Hillbrow learner said, "The money may be small but it goes a long way." Participants themselves realize that they are not earning enough money from the project to sustain themselves and their families. However, they recognize the importance of the income-supplementing money and indicate in the interviews that they are focusing on other areas of empowerment in the project.

Despite not being a business-skills program, 41% of Boitumelo participants indicated a strong interest in starting their own business in the future. Many of these had gained extra skills through Boitumelo, including participating in the computer and financial management classes at Outreach, and business development classes that they found out about through Boitumelo. A Hillbrow participant in her 40s explains: "I went to Sandton for training. I was pushed to independence. The project is helping us be what we want to be. Now I want to open my own craft shop." A Soweto participant in her 40s voiced a similar sentiment, explaining, "I want to do a business. I don't want to sit at home. We have hands." The connection between hands, productivity, and economically productive work was a recurring theme for many participants, with a learner from Hillbrow in her 40s stating boldly, "Without hands you have nothing. First listen. Then see. Then do. Now I like the way I feel. One day I will have my own company and many ladies doing embroidery."

More respondents in Hillbrow than Soweto focused on starting a business, which is reflective both of the urban context of Hillbrow and the older demographic of Soweto participants. Soweto participants were less interested in financial issues in every category identified, clearly focusing on gaining other forms of empowerment instead.

Table 7: Responses indicating Economic Empowerment

Location	Money (# people)	Money (# mentions)	Potential for jobs (# people)	Potential for jobs (# mentions)	Skills for future jobs (#people)	Skills for future jobs (# mentions)
Hillbrow	6	7	3	3	4	5
Soweto	5	5	2	2	3	4
Total	11	12	5	5	7	9

Location	Financial independence (# people)	Financial independence (# mentions)	Provide for selves/ family (# people)	Provide for selves/ family (# mentions)	Start own business (# people)	Start own business (# mentions)
Hillbrow	5	5	5	5	7	9
Soweto	2	2	4	5	2	2
Total	7	7	9	10	9	11

It is important to note that there is an economic cost in attending Boitumelo Project. Many people pay for transport to Boitumelo and only those that spend more than five hours a day at the project are eligible to have their transportation costs reimbursed. In addition to direct economic costs, there is also the opportunity cost to be considered. Participants are giving up a range of other options and cannot fulfill myriad responsibilities to their communities and families as a result of participating in

Boitumelo. A statement by a Soweto learner in her 60s illustrated the physical and mental burdens shouldered by participants:

I had depression and loneliness. You sit at home and things come up in your head...Here you don't think of troubles. You don't think of credit. Here you meet *gogos* (grandmothers) like me. You meet youngers. It is a good mix. And life is better now. Depression can kill you. The depression is gone. A big piece of work can take three months. After washing and cleaning and ironing maybe you can find time for this. But this is good. I like to be here with these women.

It is also important to note that changes in income were not specifically detailed. In part this was due to cultural reticence noted when questions of personal finance were broached. However, participants tended to indicate on an informal level that they had more money since coming to Boitumelo. Having said that, very few indicated finances as the main motivation for coming to Boitumelo in the first place or as a key reason for staying. The money certainly helps—as the above quotations reveal—but they also show that the money is by no means enough to sustain a single person or family each month.²⁴ Therefore, while economic gain is appreciated and a supplemental benefit of the project, participants participate primarily for other forms of gain now and perhaps for the promise of future economic benefit.

Finally, a statement by a Hillbrow participant in her 30s demonstrates the inherent interlinkages between economic and other forms of empowerment: “Now I am earning something I can afford to pay rent. I am special because I get money.”

Examining the Impacts of Empowerment

Detailed analysis of the 22 interviews with participants at the Hillbrow and Soweto locations of Boitumelo Project revealed a focus first on collective empowerment and next on individual forms of empowerment. Finally, and to a lesser degree, participants indicated a change in their economic situations as a result of participating in

²⁴ The Human Sciences Research Council (Schwabe, 2004) notes that the poverty level for a single-person household is R587 (US\$85). Research indicated that participants did not earn nearly this much from the project and it should be noted that most participants are supporting numerous household members.

Boitumelo Project. Findings are in line with participant observations and the results of interviews with management and facilitators explored in Chapter Four that indicated the project's emphasis in trying to facilitate and engender individual and collective forms of empowerment—manifested as stronger feelings of *power-to* achieve things; *power-within* participants; and power wielded *with* others. Chapter 4 explained that economic empowerment, manifested as the *power- to* do things on an economic basis, was a far less important goal for project conceptualizers and implementers. Clearly that is the case for project participants as well.

I argue that the social consciousness involved in Boitumelo's art projects can operate on a variety of levels. First, involvement in the process and learning how to draw and embroider pieces helps stimulate individual *power-within*, with increases in self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-respect. When artists create pieces during social-consciousness-raising workshops and gain the courage to share ideas about their work and the topic, they are developing relational *power- to*. This manifests in the development of problem-solving skills, creative, productivity, and decision-making skills about what to create and how. The collective *power- with* piece of the puzzle emerges when artists create pieces together, discuss social issues and strategies for solutions together, and realize the strength and power they gain from working together and forming common understanding and unity.

While the final form of socially transformative power is not immediately evident at Boitumelo, one Soweto artist in her sixties explained that it is important to get the stories of their lives out into the public sphere: "When I write the story, people will see that people are suffering and have no place to stay. I am old; it is unfair." Another Soweto woman in her 30s explained, "My problems are fixed in the cloth. I write my story and someone can learn about my life." While there is as yet no direct action in terms of transforming policy and effecting change, the artists perceive their work as an important message going out into the world, in the hopes that sharing their stories will result in change. This, I feel, is the beginning of a collective consciousness for social transformation. While the steps may be small, for participants who have overcome

domestic abuse, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, and fear of leaving their homes, the change in terms of participating in a safe space as a step towards engaging with and being activists is significant. A woman in her 30s who made the long, difficult journey from the Democratic Republic of Congo to South Africa depicted this change well, explaining, “I am not the newspaper of the building. I am producing the news.”

CHAPTER VI

HEALING THROUGH SKILLS TRANSFER

Any organization working towards women's empowerment should use their own power deliberately and thoughtfully in ways which actively encourage empowerment, knowing that this process may take some time; that they cannot control the process; and that in some cases it may mean they themselves, as well as men within the society, have less of some forms of power.

Jo Rowlands, *Questioning Empowerment*, 1997, p. 141

This thesis investigated participants' experiences with Boitumelo Project—both in urban Hillbrow, Johannesburg and peri-urban Jabavu, Soweto—to examine empowerment processes and outcomes. The research reveals a number of key findings concerning participants' perceptions of individual and collective responsibility, project participation, and wider social engagement, which have important implications for development initiatives in general. In my research, I aimed to answer three questions:

- Are the aims and expectations of the organizations running the programs in line with the needs and expectations of the people participating in them?
- To what extent do the capacity-building programs affect the participants' images of themselves, their roles in their households and social networks, and in the economy?
- Ultimately, do the capacity-building programs contribute positively to the empowerment of the participants, increasing their self-confidence as well as engagement in their communities and the informal and/or formal economy in South Africa?

Throughout this research, I attempted to discover whether capacity-building initiatives targeting women have meaningful impacts in terms of personal confidence

levels and successful participation in the formal and informal economy. In this case, the capacity building program chiefly investigated was an arts-and-crafts program in greater Johannesburg that focuses on healing through skills transfer—Boitumelo Sewing Project. The findings suggest that Boitumelo Project, unlike other projects examined, impacts individual and collective empowerment, improving participants' self-worth and self-confidence (*power-within*) as well as increasing their creativity, productivity (*power-to*), and sense of strength around common purpose (*power-with*). There were impacts in terms of economic empowerment but these were secondary to individual and collective empowerment as people focused on the personal and collective healing power of the project rather than the income opportunities. Despite income generated by Boitumelo not being enough to sustain its participants, they continue to attend, which displays a commitment to and appreciation of other non-economic benefits.

Are the aims and expectations of the organizations running the programs in line with the needs and expectations of the people participating in them?

The aims and expectations of the staff running Boitumelo Project were found to be consistent with the stated needs and expectations of participants. Outreach Foundation management and Boitumelo project staff revealed that they prioritized individual and social healing over economic empowerment and income generation, which was what participants indicated they wanted. Having said that, there is more focus on income-generation potential by Outreach Foundation management than either Boitumelo staff or participants. This reflects the potential for contradictory objectives in the future, particularly if economic outcomes are prioritized in the future. While displaying a high degree of participatory involvement by participants in decision-making processes—increasing process forms of empowerment—the fact that Outreach Foundation provides the location and a large portion of the funding to Boitumelo means that management could exercise *power-over* the project and change its empowerment processes and outcomes. Judging by the participants' overwhelming focus on individual and social

healing benefits of the program, a significant switch towards focusing on income generation and economic empowerment would reduce the wide-ranging and fundamental empowerment successes of the program. That is not to say that participants would not benefit from increased incomes. It is important to reiterate that the participants benefit on a far more fundamental and long-term level from the individual and collective empowerment aspects of the program. These can be used as a foundation for increased economic independence and empowerment, but should not lead to the neglect of more important forms of empowerment.

To what extent do the capacity-building programs affect the participants' images of themselves, their roles in their households and social networks, and in the economy?

Boitumelo Project was judged to have a significant effect on participants' images of themselves. Participants indicated increased feelings of *power-within* as a result of gaining skills through Boitumelo; increased levels of happiness, personal pride, and a sense of feeling 'healed.' Collective empowerment processes and outcomes could be seen in participants changed perceptions and activities in relation to other people at home and in the community. Respondents noted they were able to better interact with others, engage outside of the home, and collaborate on projects since participating in Boitumelo Project. The overwhelming majority (86%) of those interviewed credited involvement with Boitumelo for increased levels of respect that they felt from family, friends, and other members of their communities. There was less indication of increased involvement in the formal economy, but to a certain extent, Boitumelo participants are involved in trying to market and sell the products they create. This is less of a priority than individual and collective healing aspects of the program but still facilitates a limited form of economic engagement and may provide a useful entry-point to future engagement in the informal and formal economy.

Do the capacity-building programs contribute positively to the empowerment of the participants, increasing their self-confidence as well as engagement in their communities and the informal and/or formal economy in South Africa?

Finally, I argue that Boitumelo Project does contribute positively to the empowerment of participants in terms of self-confidence, engagement in the community, and to a lesser extent, in terms of interaction with the informal and formal economy in South Africa. This is in sharp contrast to the limited number of other projects examined that prioritize functional income generation outcomes in the short-term. These projects neglect to include participants in the decision-making processes of the project, resulting in lesser empowerment impact.

Kabeer has argued for emphasis on the transformative potential of *power-within*, moving on to collective, grassroots participatory action and the *power-to* exercise *power with* others. (Quoted in Parpart et. al., 2002, p. 11) I would argue that this is where empowerment manifests within the Boitumelo model. Personal empowerment manifests in internal changes from “cannot to can” which then forms the foundation for collective dimensions of empowerment as relationships with others are developed. Kabeer stresses that social transformation requires a move from project participation to policy making. It is in this area that the Boitumelo is lacking, without direct links to policy makers and no specific plan of action for specific types of social transformation. Boitumelo therefore has limits to its empowerment effectiveness because its activities do not lead to an effective and fundamental change in women’s status relative to men or the ‘powerless’ in relation to the ‘powerful’ in society. The income they earn must still be supplemented and it is difficult for them to move from dependence on the safety and comfort of the Boitumelo Project. However, Stromquist (2002, p. 36) argues that women’s NGOs like Boitumelo Project “have enabled women to realize the full dimensions of empowerment – not only the cognitive and psychological but also the economic and political dimensions.” Considering this perspective, the individual and collective empowerment impacts of

Boitumelo’s activities could be considered to be a foundation for future development in the economic realm (which is already happening) and political sphere.

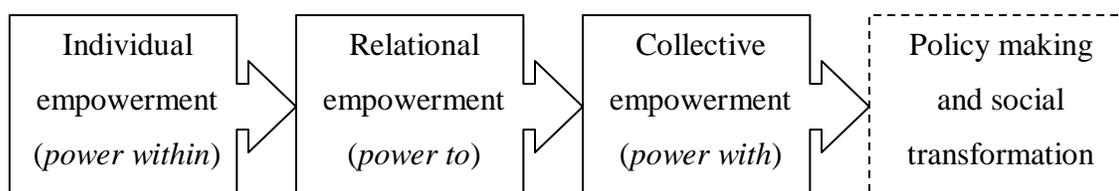
Kieffer (1984, p. 31) notes that adult empowerment involves the following three dimensions:

- development of more positive self-concept or sense of self-competence;
- construction of more critical or analytical understanding of the surrounding social and political environment; and
- cultivation of individual and collective resources for social and political actions.

I argue that Boitumelo focuses on the first two dimensions and plants the seeds for the third. Similar to the Boitumelo situation, participants in Kieffer’s study did not view themselves as ‘*having* more power,’ but rather as ‘*feeling* more powerful,’ which can mark the beginning of wider social change. (1984, p. 32)

Attempting to examine the impact of Boitumelo on a wider scale, I postulate the sequence of change in Figure 1. Participants receiving training and a positive self-image as a result of engagement with Boitumelo experience individual empowerment. As they interact with other participants and start to engage in relationship and decision-making negotiations concerning products, designs and prices, relational empowerment is developed. Finally, there are impacts for collective empowerment as participants work together on larger products, engage in social consciousness workshops, work together at markets to sell products, and discuss ways to improve their lives collective empowerment levels are raised. This conceptualization of the way in which empowerment may operate is echoed by Staudt et. al. when they explain that empowerment can be sequential: “moving from a process that develops *power-within* to the *power-to* act on one’s own and *with* others to engage publicly in action for change.” (2002, p. 244)

Figure 1: Boitumelo Model



Kabeer's policy-making link is lacking in this model but there is scope for its development in the future. It is important to note that within this model, economic empowerment is not included. In Boitumelo, economic benefit serves as supplementary income but is not the main purpose of the project, nor is it the main reason participants join or stay with the project. To the extent that participants experience individual empowerment, Boitumelo Project is having an impact. In terms of political empowerment and challenging the structural status quo locally or otherwise, however, the project impact is lacking. Having said that, the project makes no claims to engendering wider political empowerment objectives.

Swanger (2007) discusses a feminist organization in Mexico that is creating a local alternative to globalization by restoring a sense of empowerment and multidimensional humanity through community building on a small scale and creating a culture of solidarity. The model tries to enhance the welfare of all by creating a culture based on sharing, reciprocity, responsibility, accountability and mutual obligation (thereby avoiding the narrow rules of neo-liberal globalization, enhancing sustainability, creating alliances and avoiding the tyranny of the global markets). By shifting focus away from the economic side of the project and concomitantly avoiding being held prisoner by the ravages of the local and increasingly global market. Boitumelo is following similar processes. As in Mexico, Boitumelo focuses on personal healing, small-scale community building, a culture of solidarity, and the formation of a jumping-off point for social transformation on a small-scale.

Encouraging Findings

This research found that the methodology—the processes—of Boitumelo are key to its impact. These included allowing participants to join of their own volition and proceed at their own pace. The lack of accreditation and strictly regimented curriculum means that there is an open registration process and while participants are encouraged to improve their skills, there is no pressure or judgment for those who proceed more slowly. The open communication style facilitates easy acceptance of people from all backgrounds, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, engendering a relaxed atmosphere and safe space of widespread

acceptance. Rather than a model of passive education and skills receipt, participants are encouraged to be active agents in their own skill building and education. Workshops encourage people to voice their opinions and participants must create their own designs, even if they lack creative confidence initially. Participants are also encouraged to challenge assumptions and question power structures through the safety of workshops and their own creative products. Boitumelo recognizes the triple role of women: reproductive, productive and community leadership (Moser, 1989), accepting that many participants have childbearing and rearing responsibilities. Recognizing reproductive roles, the project is flexible enough to enable participants to stay home and engage in craftwork, fulfilling domestic duties while continuing to engage the project. Boitumelo acknowledges the productive roles of women, recognizing that people should be financially compensated for their labor in an equitable fashion, encouraging participation and decision-making in the product design, production, and sale processes. Finally, Boitumelo accepts the community leadership role, encouraging participants to voice their opinions, take leadership roles within the project, and engaging in social consciousness and transformation workshops in order to affect personal and community interactions.

Organizational structure is another key part of Boitumelo's empowerment success. Project facilitators are people who have grown with the organization and risen to the role and responsibility of facilitator; usually they emerge and put themselves forward for positions of responsibility. Facilitators are being encouraged to take on increasing levels of responsibility in order to move into project coordinators positions and eventually project director positions. Future opportunities exist in increased use of arts and crafts and social consciousness as a way to offer self-reflection and self-evaluation. The workshops also offer the opportunity to reflect on and adapt personal and collective roles within society, as seen in the Fair/Unfair project.

While my research only looked at a few comparative arts-and-crafts projects in an attempt to draw comparisons within the realm of empowerment, a few key conclusions can be drawn. It is clear from the limited research conducted that the healing and empowerment impact of the Boitumelo model is atypical. Other projects do not lead to the

forms or scale of empowerment identified by Boitumelo participants and program staff. Other projects have limited empowerment impacts of a functional, economic nature but do not lead to the individual and collective forms of empowerment engendered by Boitumelo. In light of these findings, particularly that Boitumelo Project focuses far more on healing through empowerment than other arts-and-crafts capacity building programs explored, I argue that Boitumelo Project presents a critical case study. Boitumelo Project demonstrates how to engender individual and community healing through empowerment, emphasizing the need for development projects to focus less on short-term functional economic empowerment through job creation and income generation and more on helping people address personal and community issues as part of a basis for positive societal transformation.

Challenges

Within the research on Boitumelo Project, there are some areas of concern that may prove to be future barriers to empowerment on a wider scale. The first is the organizational structure of Outreach Foundation Board of Directors, which is considered to be anti-democratic. Board members are all White, male, relatively well-off economically, and highly religious. While this is intrinsically unproblematic, the board lacks representatives of the participants of programs: non-White women and men, the youth, the disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. The lack of inclusion of or participation by community members or project participants is seen as a barrier to positive role modeling and a missed opportunity for empowerment. As explained in Chapter 4, the likelihood of this racial and gendered organizational structure will change in the near future because of the strong influence of the White, male-dominated Lutheran Church. This limits successful and widespread forms of empowerment at Boitumelo Project and other Outreach Foundation programs because participants are not adequately represented nor are they encouraged to take on positions of power. As such, there is little to no scope for wider political empowerment within the organization or encouragement to be involved on a wider social scale. This is unfortunate because those avenues are really

the only ways to ensure transformative personal and social empowerment and development in the long term.

Project sustainability is another area of concern: Boitumelo Project is dependent on Outreach Foundation for funding and so is at risk of manifesting a welfarist charity model which goes against the underlying ethos of the empowerment model it is trying to facilitate in participants. However, focusing on a for-profit model to ensure sustainability would threaten the heretofore-successful individual and social healing aspects of the project.

Dependency by some participants is another cause for concern. Some participants do not move on from the project and also do not take advantage of other classes, counseling, networking, and leadership training opportunities offered by Boitumelo. As such, they risk stagnancy within the project and dependency in the long term. Related to issues of dependency, there is the worry that if the current creative director leaves, the project will shift in focus to a more economic- focused model. This might enhance project sustainability financially but would undoubtedly compromise the individual, collective, and social transformation aspects of the program that are so important to the building of a multi-cultural, interdependent, trusting civil society in the new South Africa.

Boitumelo Project was designed, funded, implemented, and controlled by outside influences. It is not a project that was started by community members of Hillbrow or Soweto and so empowering impacts are limited. The Boitumelo model also does not feed directly into social transformation and challenging the existing social power structures. As such, many theorists and practitioners would argue that this limits the potential wider impacts. I would agree, noting that the lack of widespread opportunity and encouragement for participants to engage in political participation on a wider social scale limits the potentially transformative power of Boitumelo Project. To its credit, Boitumelo links participants into wider educational networks by offering them the opportunity to take business, marketing, and art classes in other locations. These offer participants the chance to engage with other organizations and increase their networks, potentially increasing their empowerment opportunities. However, there is no direct attempt to measure or increase levels of political and wider social participation, or to engender

political engagement. Participants are encouraged to question their own engagement with society and take control of their immediate spheres of existence. Taking this to the next step, to challenge societal structures and affect policy making, would build upon the individual, collective, and beginnings of economic empowerment developed within the Boitumelo framework and encourage wider and more important impacts in society.

Recommendations

There are clearly encouraging findings related to empowerment and the processes and outcomes of Boitumelo Project's activities and engagement with individuals and communities. There are also, however, challenges which Boitumelo could address to improve its impact and enhance its ability to meet empowerment and healing objectives. As such, there are a number of recommendations that I would like to make, involving program activities and organizational processes.

It is imperative that Boitumelo develop quantitative and qualitative empowerment indicators. These could involve tracking intake, participant comments, plans and activities after leaving, and changes in income and satisfaction levels during and after the program. These would help, not only to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program but also assist with fundraising activities that could enhance long-term sustainability. Boitumelo should emphasize the cross-cutting aspect of its empowerment activities and monitor the implications in all areas of participants' lives.

I would also recommend that, based on this research, Boitumelo Project specify types of empowerment that the project involves: individual and collective, with a lesser focus on economic empowerment. This would help with funding applications and the targeting of funding agencies interested in supporting similar types of empowerment.

Linking to women's associations and organizations would increase the number of people served by the program and the base of participants, as well as providing an invaluable access point to mobilize and organize to positively affect transformational change within society. In this way, the impact would progress from individual and immediate collective forms of empowerment towards more political and socially

transformative forms of change. This could be seen as the crucial next step to expand the influence and impact of the project.

The Outreach Foundation should examine and revise the composition of its board of directors and revised where necessary. Role models and communication lines within the organization affect self-perceptions, self-esteem, and conceptualizations of power held by project participants. If the board continues to be all White, all male, and does not allow participation or decision-making by the people in the community and direct beneficiaries, then empowerment goals and the concomitant ethos of transparency and accountability will be compromised. As such, Outreach Foundation should seriously consider including program participants on its board in order to reorient itself to directly hearing the needs and concerns of its target community. The focus would therefore remain centered on participatory approaches, increasing flexibility, accountability, transparency, and relationship building with the local and wider community. This would also encourage accountability and a decentralization of power.

Significance for Development

This research has wider implications for development approaches than merely the impressive impacts recorded at select arts-and-crafts programs in Johannesburg, South Africa. The findings indicate that empowerment is a valuable and valid development tool, particularly if it is utilized from a genuinely participatory process and outcomes perspective. Projects that merely focused on outcomes missed the opportunity to engage participants in arguably more important process side of empowerment. This reinforces the message of participatory development and urges development projects, regardless of scope or sector, to include so-called “beneficiaries” in the design, implementation, control, and long-term monitoring and evaluation of the project. This assists not only with ownership and buy-in from the community, it also increases the capacity of participants and reinforces the notion that process is as, if not more, important than outcome, particularly when evaluating in the short-term.

I accept that the impact of empowerment programs depends on the specific socio-economic and political context of the location of the project as well as the unique

histories of program participants. If participants identified Boitumelo project as key in personal, collective, or economic empowerment, the research accepted it as such. However, individual idiosyncrasies and personal reactions to different interventions mean that not all evidence indicating empowered behavior can be automatically ascribed to Boitumelo Project. Having said that, some limited generalizations can and have been made concerning the empowering impact of the project.

The value of Boitumelo is not in the income generation aspect, although that is a welcome supplementary benefit for participants and an appreciated part of assisting with project operation costs for management. The value of Boitumelo is that it creates a safe space for people to get out of their houses, forget about personal and familial problems that may include unemployment, HIV/AIDS, domestic abuse, lack of income, no prospects. Boitumelo provides a place to sit quietly and learn new skills that may or may not be directly related to future employment or income generation. Boitumelo Project also provides a place to make acquaintances and friends, share tea and coffee, be warm and dry, and engage with peers from the nearby community and further afield. The skill building builds self-worth, acts as a conduit for discussions about personal and social events, and provides the opportunity to hold workshops that encourage participants to engage difficult personal and social issues and then engage the issues in a creative way.

As a result of its location within a larger umbrella organization offering drama, music, computer, and life skills programs as well as counseling, Boitumelo participants are able to benefit from a wider support system which supplements the safe healing space created by Boitumelo and gives participants choices upon which to act. Boitumelo also offers networking and further skill building which empowered participants can take advantage of. Leaders within the organization may also train to be facilitators but even without official titles more experienced participants tend to new arrivals, reinforcing the support system for newcomers and feeling of self-worth and power for those adopting mentor roles. As such, Boitumelo offers a safe and restricted microcosm of society that engenders social awareness and responsibility, encourages participation, and gives participants the tools to engage with society. For some this means learning about and

applying for jobs as the space functions as an information-sharing space. For others, this is gaining further skills, applying for arts-related jobs, working in sewing shops, or starting their own Boitumelo-style project. Boitumelo does not teach formal education, literacy, numeracy, or business skills but partner programs can help with that and more. Boitumelo focuses on personal healing through creative arts, engendering individual and collective empowerment, with a lesser focus on the beginning of economic empowerment.

Within this context, economic empowerment helps people to meet their functional daily *responsibilities*. Individual empowerment helps people *participate* in programs and their lives more fully. And collective empowerment increases *social engagement*. A wealth of information and knowledge about empowerment resides in the experiences of the women and men of Boitumelo Project. I doubt I have come even close to adequately representing it here, but I hope I have made a valuable start.

APPENDIX A

MAPS

Map 1: African continent (location South Africa shown) (Source: googlemaps.com)

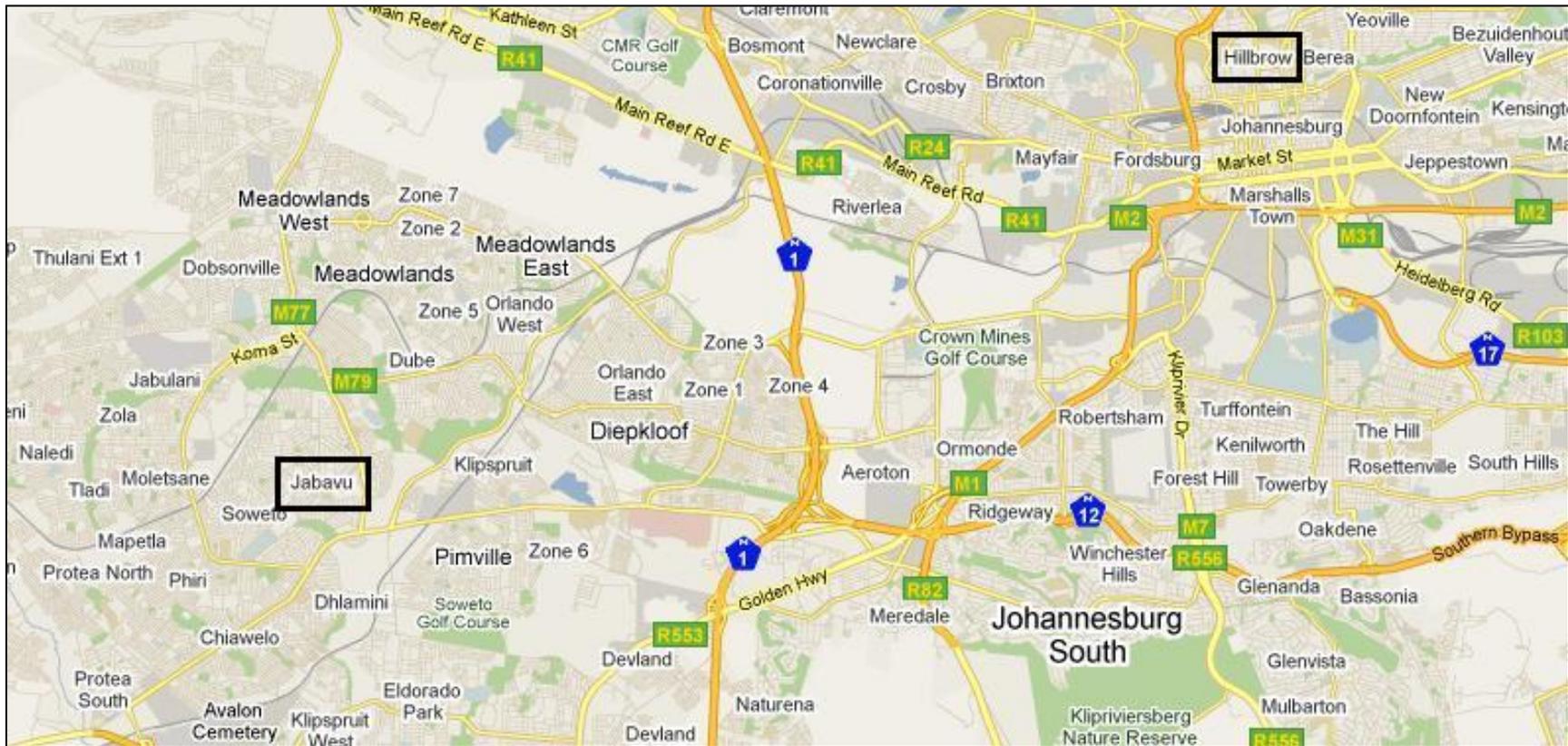


Map 2: South Africa (location of Johannesburg, South Africa shown) (Source: cia.gov)



Map 3: Research locations of Hillbrow, Johannesburg and Jabavu, Soweto

(Source: goglemaps.com)



APPENDIX B

BOITUMELO PROJECT PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you been involved with Boitumelo?
2. How often do you come to the project?
3. How long does it take you to get to the project?
4. How do you get to the project?
5. Why did you start coming to Boitumelo Project, in the beginning?
6. What did you expect to get from being part of Boitumelo project?
7. Has Boitumelo project been the way you expected it to be? Please explain.
8. How was the training process at Boitumelo?
9. What kinds of things have you learned at Boitumelo?
10. What were some of your favorite projects or activities with Boitumelo?
11. Are there other things you would like to be doing with Boitumelo? Please explain.
12. How has your life changed since being involved with Boitumelo?
13. Has anything changed for you at home since being part of Boitumelo?
14. Since being a part of Boitumelo, has anything changed in your relationship to friends or your community? (E.g. Do people treat you differently? Do you treat people differently?)
15. Do you feel differently about yourself since you started with Boitumelo? Please explain.
16. What would you be doing if you were not coming to Boitumelo? (What did you do before spending this time with Boitumelo?)
17. Are you getting what you expected from your experience with Boitumelo? Please explain.

18. Is there anything you would like to change in your Boitumelo experience? Please explain.
19. Are you taking any other classes or training? Please explain.
20. What do you hope to do in the future?

Thank you very much for your time! This questionnaire is completely anonymous and confidential. Please tell me a little bit about yourself. Thank you. M / F

Age range: 20s / 30s / 40s / 50s / 60+ Education level: _____

Where are you from? _____ Home language: _____

APPENDIX C

BOITUMELO PROJECT FACILITATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you been involved with Boitumelo?
2. Why did you start coming to Boitumelo Project?
3. What did you expect to get from being part of Boitumelo project?
4. When did you become a facilitator?
5. How did it feel to become a facilitator?
6. Do you feel like you have a lot of power as a facilitator? Please explain.
7. What is your role as a facilitator?
8. What parts of your job do you like?
9. What parts of your job do you NOT like?
10. Has Boitumelo project been the way you expected it to be? Please explain.
11. How was the training process for you at Boitumelo?
12. What were some of your favorite projects or activities with Boitumelo?
13. Are there other things you would like to be doing with Boitumelo? Please explain.
14. How has your life changed since being involved with Boitumelo?
15. Has anything changed for you at home since being part of Boitumelo?
16. Since being a part of Boitumelo, has anything changed in your relationship to friends or your community? (E.g. Do people treat you differently? Do you treat people differently?)
17. Do you feel differently about yourself since you started with Boitumelo? Please explain.
18. What would you be doing if you were not coming to Boitumelo? (What did you do before spending this time with Boitumelo?)
19. Are you getting what you expected from your experience with Boitumelo? Please explain.

20. Is there anything you would like to change in your Boitumelo experience? Please explain.
21. Are you taking any other classes or training? Please explain.
22. What do you hope to do in the future?

Thank you very much for your time! This questionnaire is completely anonymous and confidential. If it is OK, please tell me a little bit about yourself. Thank you.

M / F

Age range: 20s / 30s / 40s / 50s / 60+ Education level: _____

Where are you from? _____ Home language: _____

APPENDIX D

BOITUMELO PROJECT CREATIVE DIRECTOR

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you been running “your” project?
2. What does your project aim to do? Does the project have a different mission from that of Outreach Foundation?
3. How does each project fit in with Outreach Foundation and other projects?
4. How do you conceptualize your role within the project?
5. How much freedom and power do you have to run “your” project??
6. How many facilitators do you have (male/female)?
7. Do you train up project participants to be facilitators?
8. If not, is that a future goal?
9. How many classes do you run? How many levels are there?
10. How many students are there in each class usually?
11. How do you get participants? (advertise, etc.)
12. How do you select participants?
13. What is the demographic of students? (ages, gender, where do they come from, school levels, etc.)
14. Why do students tend to take the classes?
15. What percentage of students completes the classes? (Male female breakdown?)
16. Do you have any idea how many students go all the way through? (lowest to highest possible class)
17. What do students go on to do after completing the classes?

18. How does the notion of power feature in your project? We talked about your power, but how about the students' power? E.g. over curriculum or times, or how they spend their time in the project, etc?
19. How is "your" project assessed in terms of impact? Internally, externally?
20. Do you have any memorable success stories?
Are there any key challenges that the project is facing at the moment?
21. Is there anything you would like to have changed in terms of your project's processes, etc.?
22. What are your long-term plans for the project?

Thank you very much for your participation.

M / F

Age range: 20s / 30s / 40s / 50s / 60+

Education level: _____

Where are you from? _____ Home language: _____

APPENDIX E

BOITUMELO PROJECT PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you been in management at Outreach Foundation?
2. How do you conceptualize your role at Outreach?
3. In your eyes, what is the mission of the organization?
4. How does each project fit in with this mission?
5. How much do you have to do with the running of each project?
6. Would you say that project directors/coordinators/facilitators have a fair amount of freedom and power? How do you feel about that?
7. Are assessments conducted on an individual project basis, or is there a uniform impact assessment process?
8. How does communication function within the organization?
9. Do you have any memorable success stories of the organization or individual projects?
10. Are there any key challenges that the organization is facing at the moment?
11. Is there anything you would like to change in terms of your processes, etc.?
12. What are your short-term and long-term plans for the organization?
13. How does fundraising work at the organization?
14. Is there an organization-wide ethos where everyone is responsible, or is there a resource development person, etc?
15. How does the notion of power feature in your project?
16. My research is on empowerment but I wondered how important this is in terms of Outreach and the organization overall?
17. How does Outreach interact with the community?

18. For example, do community members have a say in what kinds of programs are offered, etc?
19. Is there a policy whereby project coordinators, facilitators, beneficiaries and/or the community can comment on the impact of the organization?
20. Do you see a strong connection between training or project activities and post-project activities? If so, in what way?

Thank you very much for your cooperation and active participation. M / F

Age range: 20s / 30s / 40s / 50s / 60+ Education level: _____

Where are you from? _____ Home language: _____

APPENDIX F

BOITUMELO PROJECT NON-PARTICIPANT

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your role in your family and community?
2. What do you do in order to make a living?
3. What kind of education or training have you had in the past?
4. How would you rate your personal confidence level?
5. Have you ever participated in adult training programs? If so, please describe them.
6. Have you ever been interested to participate in adult training?
7. If so, why? If not, why not?

Thank you very much for your cooperation and participation in the research. M / F

Age range: 20s / 30s / 40s / 50s / 60+ Education level: _____

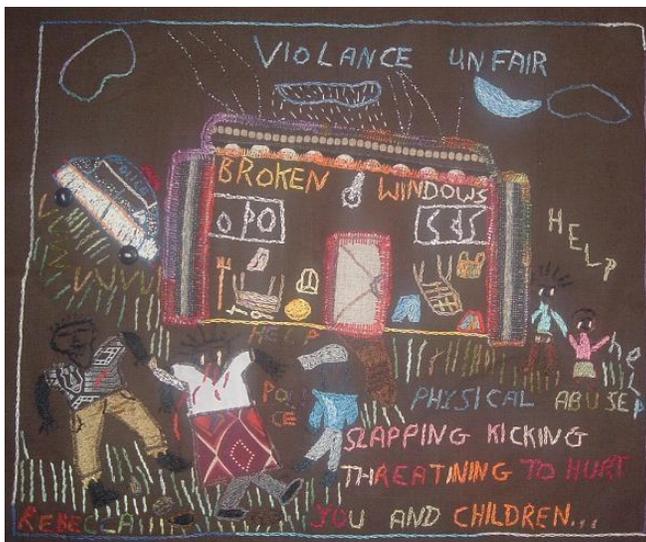
Where are you from? _____ Home language: _____

APPENDIX G

SOCIAL ISSUES IN BOITUMELO ART

Theme: Fairness and Unfairness

Figure 2: Violence Unfair



Text:

Violence (sic)
unfair

Broken windows
Help

Physical abuse
Slapping
Kicking

Threatening to
hurt you and the
children...

Figure 3: Violence Fair

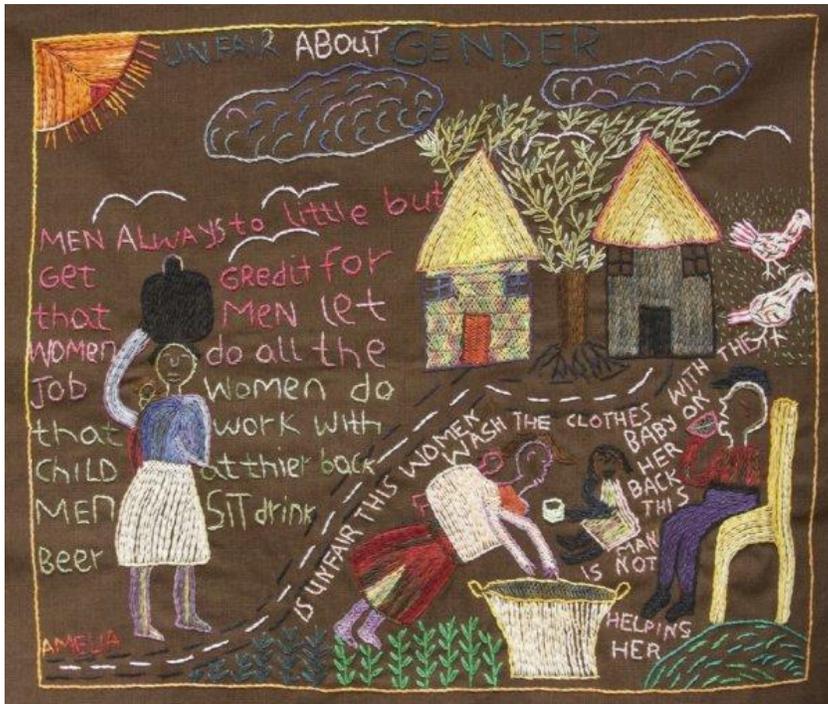


Text:

Fair

We are a happy
family
Social worker
Love one
another
Where possible
help you find
access to
medical attention
and victim
counselling

Figure 4: Unfair about Gender



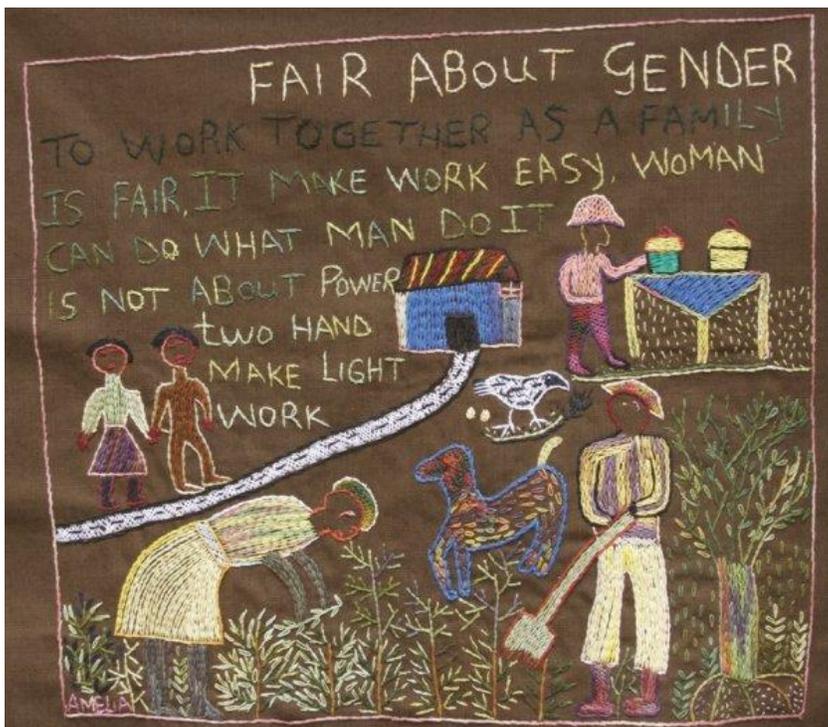
Text: Unfair about Gender

Men always do little but get credit for that. Men let women do all the job

Women do that work with child at their back. Men sit drink beer

Is unfair this women wash the clothes with the baby on her back This man is not helping her

Figure 5: Fair about Gender



Text:

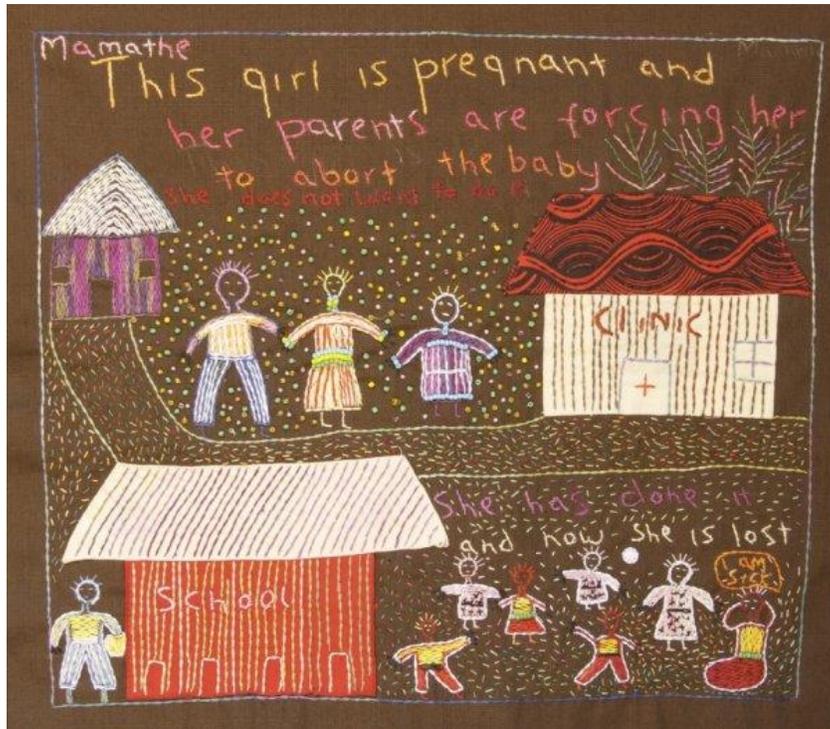
Fair about Gender

To work together as a family is fair It make work easy

Woman can do what man do. It is not about power

Two hand make light work

Figure 6: Unfair about Choice



Text:

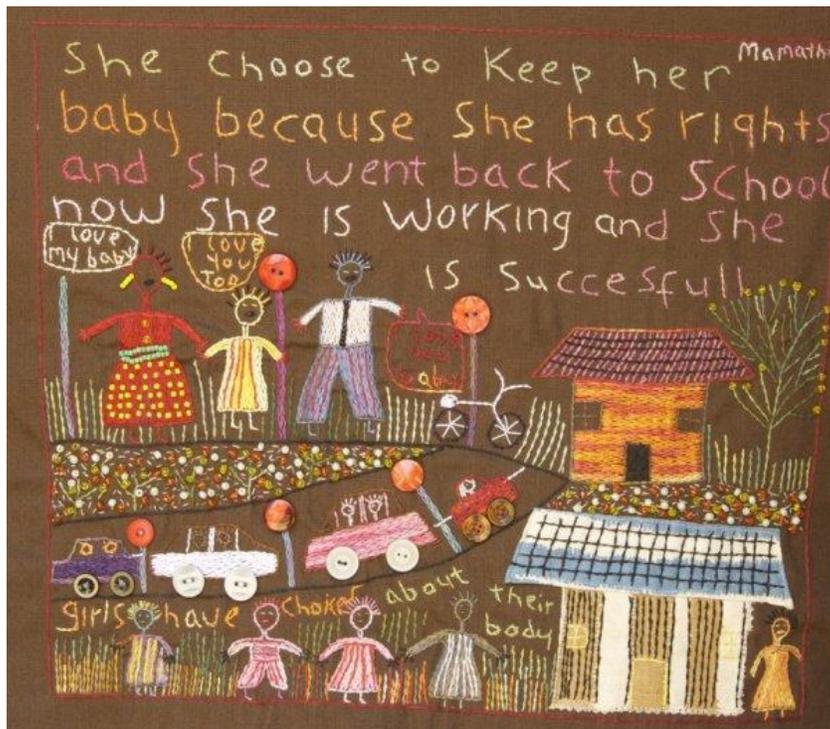
This girl is pregnant and her parents are forcing her to abort the baby

She does not want to do it

She has done it and now she is lost

“I am sick”

Figure 7: Fair about Choice



Text:

She choose to keep her baby because she has rights and she went back to school

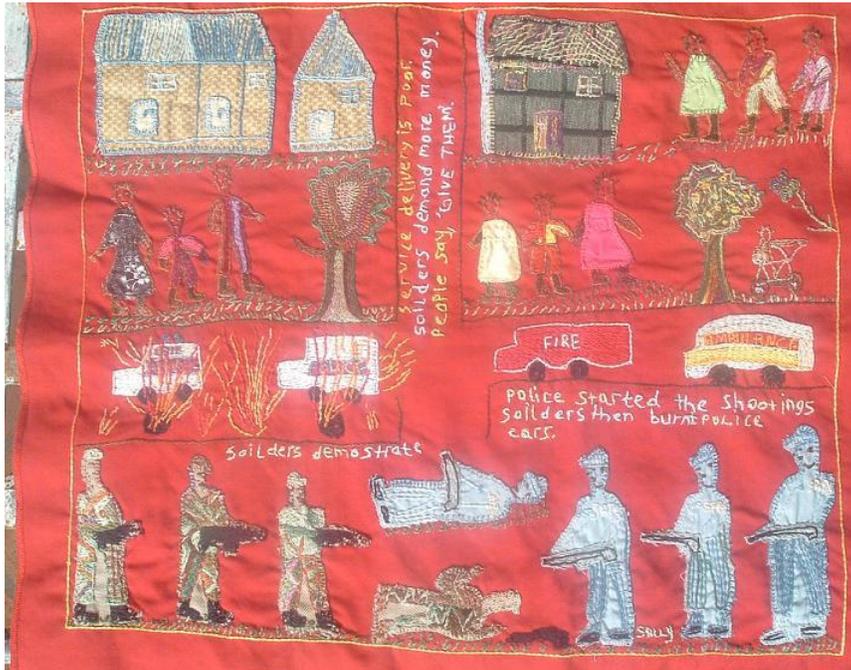
Now she is working and she is successful.

“I love my baby”
“I love you, too”

Girls have choice about their body

Theme: Xenophobia

Figure 8: Service Delivery is Poor

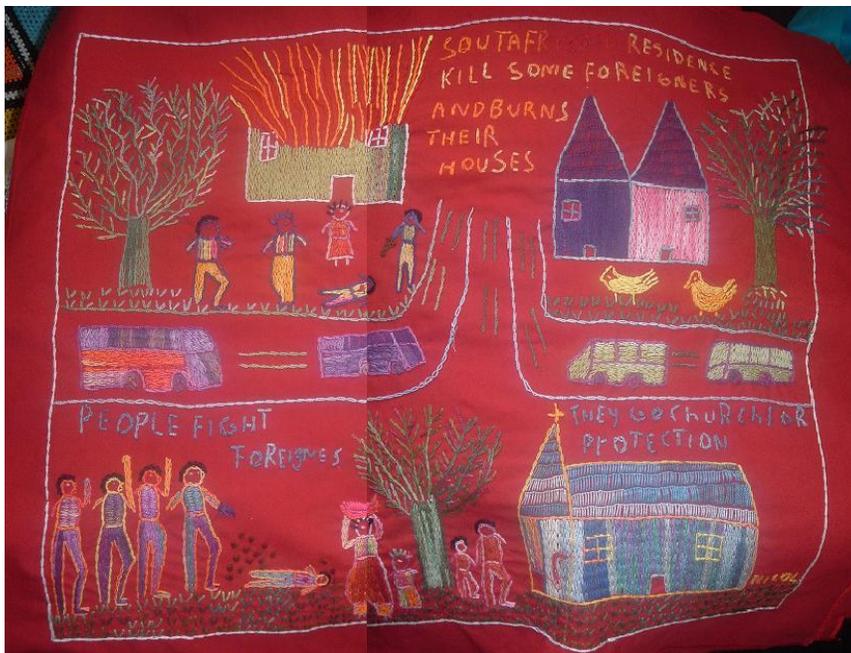


Text:

Service delivery is poor
Soldiers demand more money
People say "Give them"
Soldiers demonstrate

Police started the shootings
Soldiers then burnt police cars

Figure 9: People fight Foreigners



Text:

South Africa residence kill some foreigners and burns their houses (sic)

People fight foreigners

They go church for protection (sic)

Figure 10: People Fight because of Discrimination



Text:

People fight
because
discrimination
(sic)

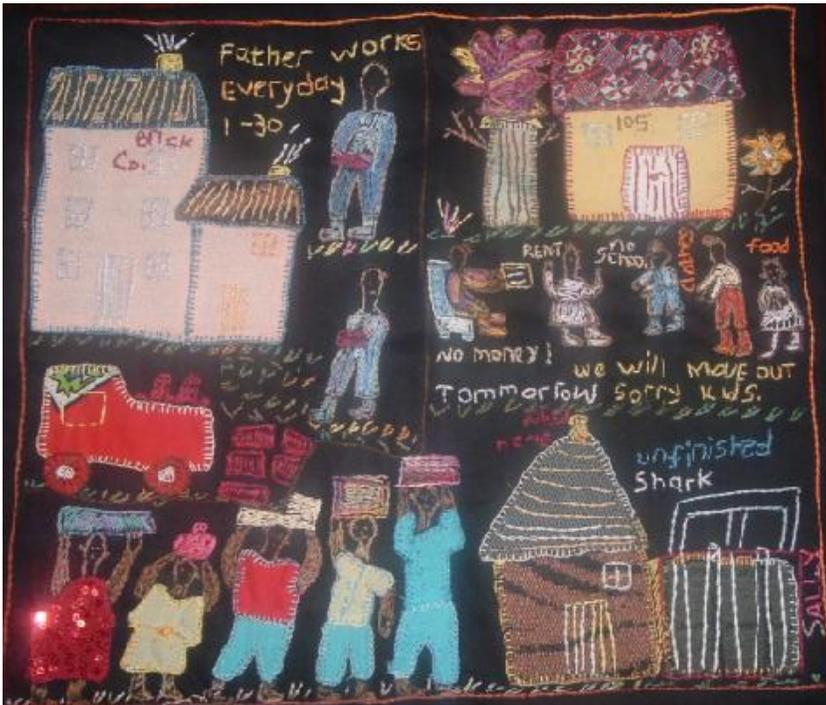
People harass
other people

Stop fighting

I will kill you

Other themes: social issues, education, nature, sports, music, health, etc.

Figure 11: Daily Life



Text:

Father works
everyday

Rent
No school
Clothes
Food
No money

Tomorrow we
will move out

Sorry kids

Unfinished shack

Figure 12: Education as Key to the Future



Figure 13: Olden Days

Text:

In olden days
women used to
fetch wood at the
mountains



Figure 14: AIDS Care

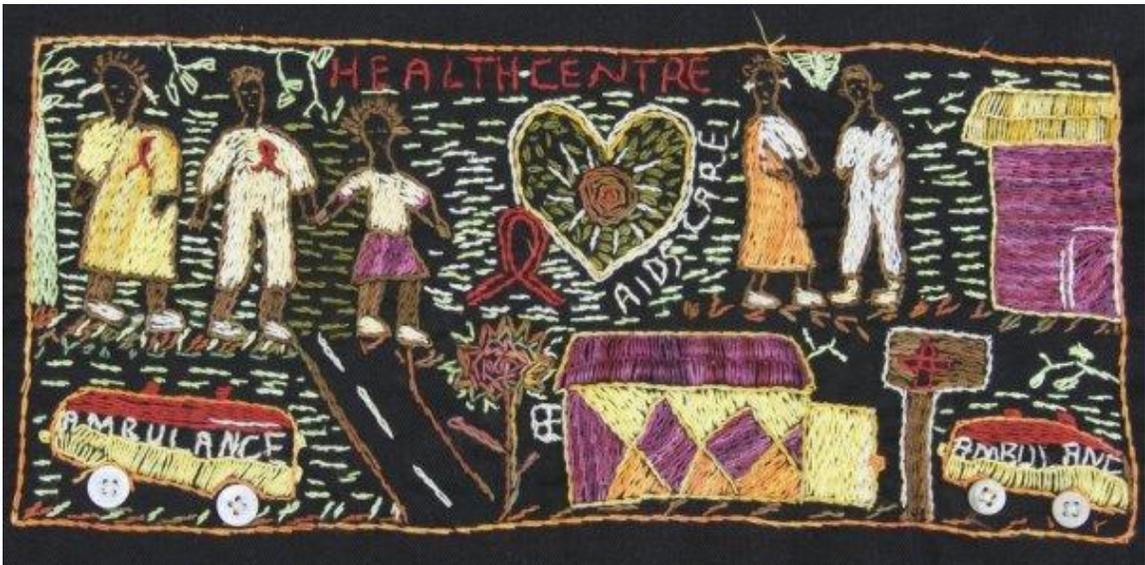


Figure 15: Jacaranda Tree



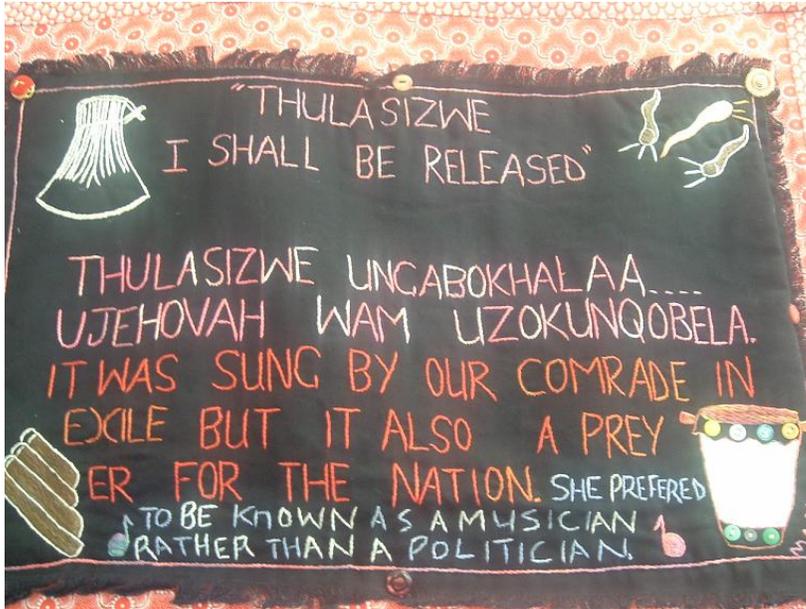
Text:

Some tree
provide us with
leaves that we
boil to meke
cough mixture
(sic)

Jacaranda tree

Figure 16: I Shall Be Released

(Part of a larger Miriam Makeba wall hanging)



Text: (Zulu)
Thula sizwe
ungabokhalaa...
Ujehovah wam
uzonkunqobela
(Hush nation, do
not cry, our God
will protect us)
It was sung by
our comrade in
exile but it was
also a prayer for
the nation.
She preferred to
be known as a
musician rather
than a politician.

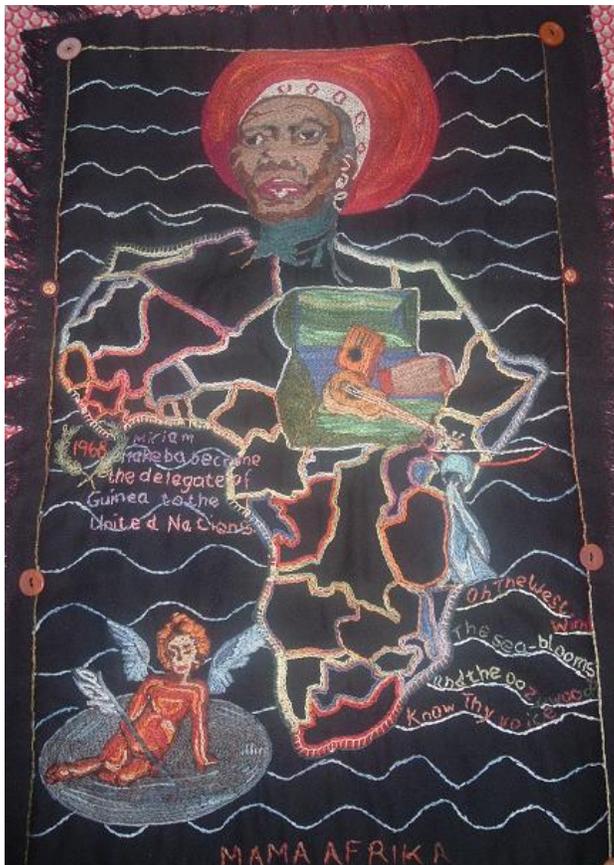


Figure 17: Mama Afrika

Text:

1968: Miriam
Makeba became
the delegate of
Guinea to the
United Nations

On the West
wind
The sea blooms
And the other
worlds
Know thy voice

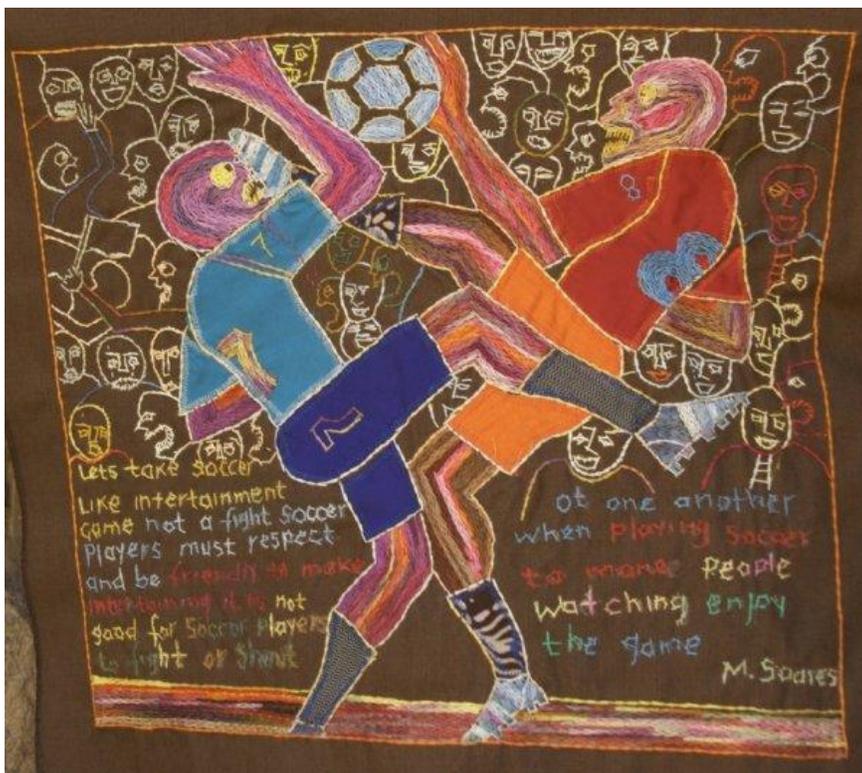
Figure 18: Soweto Pride



Text:

Come and have a visit at Soweto you will see beautiful houses, parks, stadiums, shopping malls, B&B, restaurants, taverns, and the biggest Soweto Orlando Cooling Towers

Figure 19: Let's Take Soccer



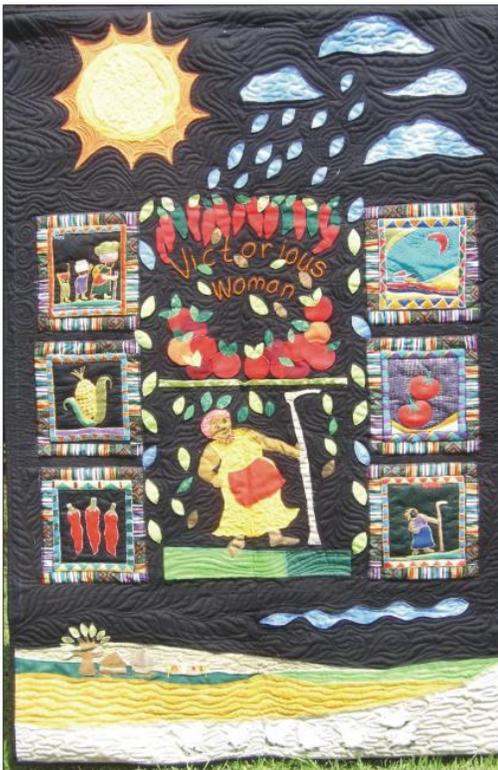
Text:

Let's take soccer. Like entertainment game not a fight. Soccer players must respect and be friendly to make entertaining

It is not good for soccer players to shout at one another when playing soccer to make people watching enjoy the game

APPENDIX H

PRODUCTS BY OTHER PROJECTS

Figure 20: The Victorious Woman (Tambani)

This quilt tells the story of the rejected wife. She was miserable but then she grabbed her hoe, made a new garden for herself and her five little boys, built herself a house, had a productive harvest, and became “The Victorious Woman.”

(Source: www.tambani.co.za)

Figure 21: A HotBag

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