



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

# **TRAUMA EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN WHO MADE SUBMISSIONS AT THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION HEARINGS**

by

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

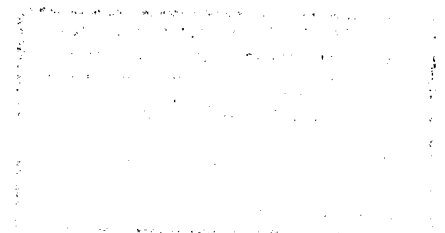
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**Dedicated to:**  
**My husband, Ben Nomoyi**

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**TITLE** : Trauma experienced by women who made submissions at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings

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**DEPARTMENT** : Criminology

**DEGREE** : Doctor Philosophiae

## SUMMARY

This study focused on the impact of the revelations at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings on 30 female victims of all races. An explanatory model, the **TRC Revelation Aftermath Model** was designed to direct the research and to interpret the data. Researcher made use of a non-probability sampling strategy. Five respondents were selected by purposive sampling and 25 were selected by means of the snowball sampling. The sample of this study consisted of **three components**, namely ten Commissioners of the TRC, ten Co-ordinators who worked in the TRC offices, as well as 30 **female victims of all races**. The Commissioners were interviewed to validate the data obtained from the victims while the Co-ordinators were consulted merely to obtain general information on the criteria which was used to process the applications submitted by the victims in order to receive the reparations.

The analysis of the data revealed that the respondents accepted **three assumptions**, namely, they were invulnerable with regard to trauma such as that caused by the revelations of the TRC. In addition to this they viewed life as **meaningful** and that they also had a **positive** attitude towards it before the political conflict of the apartheid era in South Africa impacted on them. These assumptions were interpreted in terms of Janoff-

Bulman and Frieze's theory. The research findings indicated that the assumptions were not only affected by the revelations but that they also influenced the way in which these women experienced the TRC process.

It was found that the victim respondents, whose family members had disappeared and were never confirmed dead, had suffered exacerbated emotions which were characterised by denial. This was the result of repressed memories associated with the grief. Of importance too, was the finding that a few of the victims were successful in deriving meaning from their suffering, while others, who could not achieve this, could not reconcile with their perpetrators and this was determined by their age. As the former were willing to forgive their perpetrators they had thus found inner peace.

During the interviews, the victims mentioned that although the TRC had appeared to be necessary before they made their submissions, however, after it had disappointed them by not granting them reparations, this exacerbated their suffering as they felt that they had been discriminated against in favour of the perpetrators who were granted amnesty irrespective of not having made full disclosures. According to **Parsons General Action System** all the respondents experienced their trauma as biological entities, and thus suffered symptoms related to psychosomatic illnesses such as, inter alia, headaches, insomnia, and ulcers. These were accompanied by personality characteristics such as anger, aggression, as well as hatred. As the victims could not function in isolation, they also endured ostracisation related to cultural stereotypes and in this way, their suffering was perceived as secondary to that of males. Furthermore, within the social system, the victims who perceived the TRC as biased, believed that it had caused the country embarrassment by bringing up the conflict of the apartheid era. However, others verbalised that the Commission was a good initiative for South Africa so that peace as well as reconciliation could be facilitated for the sake of unity. It is crucial to stress the finding that some of the respondents, although few, who had been granted reparations, were satisfied with the TRC and perceived it as fair and thus could reconcile with their perpetrators. The research report concludes with a number of recommendations for the establishment of support services for the traumatised victims as well as integrative

mechanisms, which could encourage co-operation between the citizens of South Africa so that the reconciliation which the TRC facilitated can be sustained.

### **KEY TERMS**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, amnesty, violence, human rights, reconciliation, apartheid, trauma, grief, bereavement.



<b>TITEL</b>	:	Trauma ervaar deur vroue wat onthullings gemaak het tydens die Waarheids- en Versoeningskommissie se aanhoor van getuienis
<b>DEUR</b>	:	N C Nomoyi
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## OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsing let op die uitwerking van die onthullings voor die Waarheids- en Versoeningskommissie (WVK) op 30 vroulike slagoffers van alle rasse. 'n Verduidelikende model, die **WVK Onthullings-nawerkingsmodel** (vgl. Figuur 2.1), was ontwerp om die navorsing te rig en die data te interpreteer. Die navorser het gebruik gemaak van 'n strategie vir nie-waarskynlikheidsmonsterneming. Vyf respondente was geselekteer deur gerigte monsterneming en 25 deur middel van sneeubal-monsterneming. Die monster van hierdie studie bestaan uit **drie komponente**, naamlik tien Kommissarisse van die WVK, tien Ko-ordineerdes werksaam in die WVK-kantore, asook 30 vroulike slagoffers van **alle rasse**. Onderhoude was gevoer met die Kommissarisse om die data, verkry van die slagoffers, te bekragtig, terwyl die Ko-ordineerders genader was om algemene inligting te bekom rakende die kriteria wat gebruik was om die slagoffers se aansoeke vir genoegdoening te verwerk.

Die analise van die data het aan die lig gebring dat die respondente **drie aannames** aanvaar het, te wete dat hulle onkwesbaar is aangaande trauma soos navore gekom het in die onthullings voor die WVK, dat die lewe **sinvol** is en dat hulle 'n **positiewe instelling** daarteenoor gehad het voordat die politieke konflik van die apartheidstydperk

in Suid-Afrika op hulle geïmpakteer het. Hierdie aannames is geïnterpreteer ooreenkomstig die teorie van Janoff-Bulman en Frieze. Die navorsingsbevindinge toon aan dat die aannames nie net geraak was deur die onthullings nie, maar dat dit ook die wyse waarop hierdie vrouens die WVK-proses ondervind het, beïnvloed het.

Daar is vasgestel dat die slagoffer-respondente, van wie familie-lede verdwyn het sonder dat sodanige persone se dood ooit bevestig was, se emosionele lyding vererger was, welke lyding gekenmerk was deur ontkenning. Hierdie was die gevolg van onderdrukte herinneringe gekoppel aan hul smart. Van belang is dat enkele van die slagoffers daarin geslaag het om sin uit hul lyding te verkry, terwyl ander vir wie dit nie beskore was nie, hul nie met die daders kon versoen nie en dit was die gevolg van hulle ouderdom. Aangesien die eersgenoemdes bereid was om die daders te vergewe, het hulle innerlike vrede ondervind.

Gedurende die onderhoue het die slagoffers genoem dat die WVK vir hulle belangrik gelyk het voordat daardie slagoffers hul betoë voorgelê het, maar toe die WVK nie aan hul versoeke vir genoegdoening gevolg gegee het nie, is hulle lyding vererger want hulle het gevoel dat hulle uitgebuit word ten voordele van die daders wat amnestie verkry het afgesien daarvan of hulle volle onthullings gedoen het of nie. Volgens **Parsons se General Action System** het al die respondente hul trauma as biologiese wesens ondervind en daarom aan simptome gelyk wat verband hou met psigosomatiese siektes soos byvoorbeeld hoofpyn, slaaploosheid en maagsere. Laasgenoemdes het gepaard gegaan met persoonlikheidsreaksies soos woede, aggressie asook haat. Aangesien die slagoffers nie op hul eie kon funksioneer nie, was hulle ook sosiaal uitgeskuif as gevolg van kulturele stereotipes en hierdeur was hul lyding gesien as ondergeskik aan dié van mans. Voorts, binne die sosiale sisteem, sien die slagoffers die WVK as bevooroordeel en glo dat dit die land benadeel het deur die konflik as gevolg van apartheid in die kalklig te plaas. Daar was egter ander wat die mening gehuldig het dat die Kommissie 'n goeie inisiatief vir Suid-Afrika was sodat vrede en versoening gefasiliteer kan word met die oog op eenheid. Dit is noodsaaklik om daarop te wys dat enkele van die respondente, wat genoegdoening ontvang het, tevrede was met die WVK