Food, Sex and Text: Exploring Survival Sex in the Context of Food Insecurity through Communal Readings of the Book of Ruth

Linda Naicker

Student Number: 3716083

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Supervisor: Prof. Sarojini Nadar

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ABSTRACT

The study explored how contextual Bible study (CBS) contributes to the understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Even though South Africa is a food secure nation, a large percentage of the population is food insecure. While researchers focus significantly on transactional sex and other forms of sexual exchange, survival sex, particularly in the context of food insecurity has not been extensively or adequately researched from the South Africa perspective. CBS as a communal, participatory, collaborative and empowering process is designed as a literary platform upon which community concerns and social justice issues are addressed. Through CBS, conducted with a group of purposefully selected Christian women, the factors that drive survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality was explored. The study was qualitative, exploratory and empirical by design. In an examination of how CBS supports and inspires a liberationist and empowering analysis of survival sex in the context of food insecurity, reader-response theory was employed to trace the trajectory of participants' reading and interpretation as they interpreted the biblical text of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible against the backdrop of the exchange of sex for food in both text and context. Through the lens of African Womanism the survival strategies, experiences and motivations of food insecure women was examined. Employing African Women's Theology, the study explored how CBS produces theologies of hope and survival. The study produced three main findings. A) Ecclesial enculturation, propagated mainly through patriarchal biblical interpretation and ecclesial culture inhibits the Church's response to and even facilitates the ideological oppression of women, creating fertile environments for survival sex in the context of food insecurity. B) The exchange of sex as a subsistence strategy is driven by structural and systemic injustices and the perpetuation of male hegemony, leading to the feminization of poverty and the feminization of survival. C) CBS with its liberationist outlook redefines ecclesial biblical interpretation, thereby creating a clearer understanding of the theological incongruities in ecclesial renderings and understandings of sin and survival, justice, redemption and hope as it relates to survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

Key Terms: survival sex, food insecurity, contextual Bible study (CBS), the feminization of poverty, ecclesial enculturation

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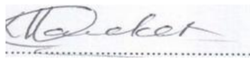
DECLARATION

I declare that 'Food, Sex and Text: Exploring Survival Sex in the Context of Food Insecurity through Communal Readings of the Book of Ruth' is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Linda Naicker October 2021



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For our granddaughter,
Azariah Neha Naicker

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Chapter One

Thou wast not born for death,

Immortal Bird!

No hungry generations tread thee down;

The voice I hear this passing night, was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,

She stood in tears amid the alien corn

"Ode to a Nightingale" by John Keats (1819)

In this poem, John Keats, upon hearing the nightingale song, imagined that it could be the same poignant song that accompanied the vulnerable Ruth in the Old Testament Book of Ruth, as she stood in the harvest field, gleaning for survival. The universality of women's suffering is highlighted through the character and experiences of Ruth. The poem emphasizes that the life of Ruth represents the lived experiences of so many women through the annals of time who "find themselves vulnerable in the face of patriarchal structures" (Lawler 2010: 1).

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. I have chosen to explore this topic through a decidedly different methodological framing – namely through communal readings of the Book of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible. The rationale for using this method is that the parallels between women's lives in this biblical text and the lives of urban food insecure women in South Africa are stark and through CBS (contextual Bible study), community knowledge and theological insight on issues of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality can be garnered. The biblical text of Ruth contains the story of a woman who in desperation for food and sustenance offers her

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body to a wealthy man in exchange for food and security. CBS is a communal, liberationist mode of reading of a biblical text. The method brings together two types of reading of the text – text and context – in a collaborative way. CBS as a religious resource is used to explore issues of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in both text and context. In this chapter, I present a profile of the Msunduzi Municipality. I elucidate the motivation for embarking on this study and present a background to the study. Next, I present the aims of the study. Lastly, I present the structure of the thesis.

1.1. Motivation

Food insecurity is a persistent problem in South Africa with over 1,7 million households across the country experiencing hunger (Statistics South Africa 2019: 18). In the past, food insecurity was considered largely a rural problem. However, more recently, scholars note that the urban manifestations of food insecurity are stark. Battersby and Haysom (2019: 2) for example, assert that historically, food security in South Africa was primarily addressed by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries through the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) with a decidedly rural development focus. The focus was on production and food insecurity was largely framed as a problem of rural poverty. The IFSS's focus on rural food security issues placed emphasis on food availability, not access, and this focus continues to inform policy and food security responses. In South Africa, there is adequate availability of food. The problem, particularly in urban South Africa, is access. Even though over 60% of South Africa is already urbanized, governmental policies and mandates regarding food security do not reflect this shift. As a result, urban food insecurity and its causes and manifestations remains under researched. Urban household food insecurity is as a result of several intersecting factors. Moreover, income reliability is a key determinate of food security because people rely on markets to obtain food. A guaranteed income means people are better able to plan for the purchase and preparation of food (Haysom 2017: 145, Warshawsky 2011: 10).

In the Msunduzi Municipality, rising unemployment as a result of the collapse of key manufacturing initiatives such as the shoe industry, severely affected people's ability to access

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meaningful employment (Crush and Caesar 2014: 167). In this context, the urban poor regularly go hungry with 90% of households severely or moderately food insecure. For under resourced households, social grants are a critical source of stabilizing income. However, social grants are not adequate to ensure food security because amounts paid out are relatively small and insufficient to meet competing demands on household income (Crush and Caesar, 2014: 174, Abrahams and Smith 2016: 4). Spatial access is also a critical determinate of food security. Apartheid and post-apartheid inequalities and poorly integrated public transport leads to lengthy and costly commutes for scholars and the working poor, reducing the ability to access nutritious food (Zager 2011: 2). Female headed households are generally considered as less food secure, however, they are found to often be more food secure than nuclear households with similar incomes suggesting that agency may shape their food security (Battersby and Marshak 2016: 5, Crush and Tawodzera 2012: 35). Because women are typically viewed as being responsible for acquiring and cooking family meals, the burden of access to food generally rests on women (Abrahams and Smith 2016: 9).

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Initiatives such as urban community food gardens have been identified as one solution to the food insecurity crisis in South Africa. While both men and women engage in governmental and NGO programmes to generate food through these gardens, the majority of urban food growers are women. However, Battersby and Haysom (2016: 8) maintain that there is little evidence to suggest that urban agriculture is making a meaningful contribution to the food insecurity problem in South Africa. They argue that food insecurity in South African cities must be addressed from the perspective of systemic and structural inequalities. It is presumptuous, they maintain, to assume that the poorest of the poor have access to the social networks that facilitate urban agriculture such as access to NGO and governmental empowerment programmes that provide land, seed and support to sustain urban community food gardens. In order to comprehensively confront the food insecurity problem in South Africa, argues Battersby and Haysom (2016: 9), the State must address its systemic drivers.

In this context of limited access and systemic oppression, scholars indicate that the primary

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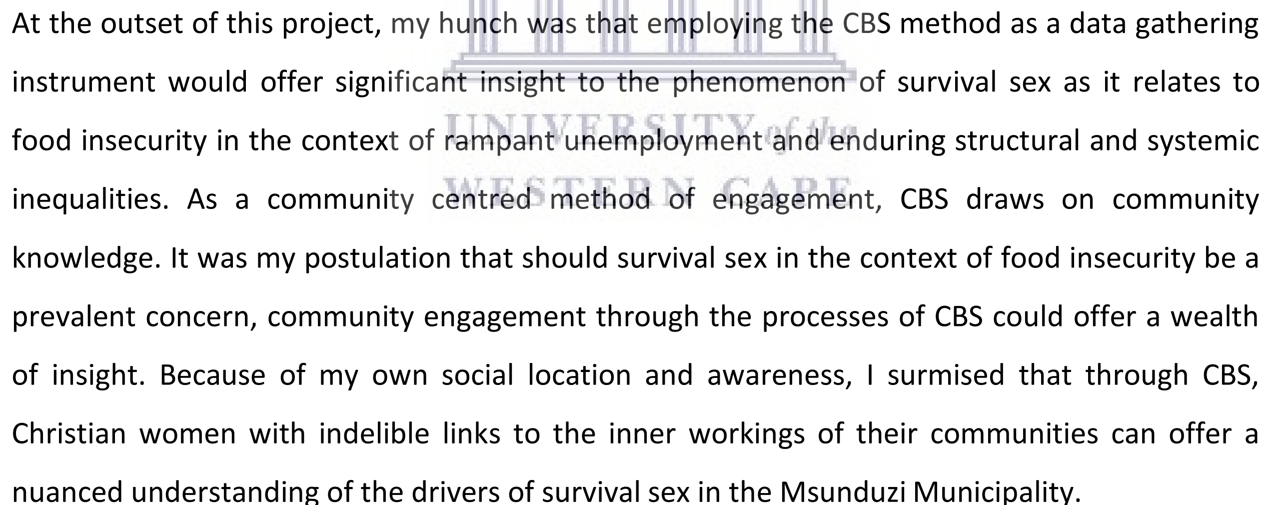
motivation for survival sex is food insecurity (Leclerc-Madlala 2008, Formson and Hilhorst 2016, Stoebenau et al 2011, Chettiar et al 2010, Mamba and Graciana 2016). The unemployment rate amongst women in the Msunduzi Municipality is higher than that of men (Crush and Caesar 2014, Govender 2018: 5, Msunduzi Municipality 2016: 1). Only 15% of women have employment as opposed to 28% men (Dodson et al 2012, Crush and Caesar 2014, Caesar, Crush and Hill 2013: 9). While there is evidence of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the literature globally (Wall and Bell 2011, Goddard 2005, Krens 2016) and in South Africa (Stoebenau et al 2016, Formson and Hilhorst 2016), survival sex in the context of food insecurity in South Africa over the past two decades is largely under researched. Much of the literature from South Africa relating to sexual exchange places emphasis on the HIV and AIDS pandemic. As a result, survival sex in the context of food insecurity is largely, marginally addressed.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At the outset of this project, my hunch was that employing the CBS method as a data gathering instrument would offer significant insight to the phenomenon of survival sex as it relates to food insecurity in the context of rampant unemployment and enduring structural and systemic inequalities. As a community centred method of engagement, CBS draws on community knowledge. It was my postulation that should survival sex in the context of food insecurity be a prevalent concern, community engagement through the processes of CBS could offer a wealth of insight. Because of my own social location and awareness, I surmised that through CBS, Christian women with indelible links to the inner workings of their communities can offer a nuanced understanding of the drivers of survival sex in the Msunduzi Municipality.

1.2. A Profile of the Msunduzi Municipality

South Africa consists of nine provinces, namely, North West, Northern Cape, Free State, Western Cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The most populace Province is Gauteng followed by KwaZulu-Natal. The Msunduzi Municipality is one of seven local

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municipalities in the Mgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal and is the second largest urban centre in KwaZulu-Natal. As the provincial capital of KwaZulu-Natal, the Msunduzi Municipality has a population of around 679 039 people and over 164 000 households, comprising of around 60% of the District's population. The Municipality has seen high levels of urbanization over the last three decades and is projected to grow by 80% by 2050 (The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government 2017/2018: 1). Rapid urbanization of Msunduzi resulted in large numbers of people moving from peripheral rural areas to urban and semi-urban areas in search of employment opportunities. The majority of the population is African, comprising around 80% of the total population. Indians constitute 12% of the province's population, Whites 8% and Coloureds 3%.[1]

Settlements within the municipality range from extensive low-density rural settlements in Vulindlela to urban slums and poorly developed dormitory townships and well-developed areas where relatively large informal settlements have also developed. Significantly, Vulindlela has the second highest population in the Msunduzi Municipality with a population of around 161 562 and 85 000 households. Considerably less developed and economically active than other areas in Msunduzi with poor and limited infrastructure, the area is characterised by unemployment and poverty. Moreover, the area is seen as the epicentre of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in South Africa (CINDI 2016: 7). In recent years, economic decline led to a high unemployment rate and poor service delivery in the Msunduzi Municipality. This, coupled with rapid migration to urban areas poses a major livelihoods challenge, particularly for under resourced urban communities.[2]

English and IsiZulu are the predominant languages. Signs of apartheid's legacy are evident in Msunduzi with spatial allocation of land and development still running along racial lines. Black

[1] I recognize that racial categories such as these are fraught with contestation. However, I use these racial categories because this is how the population of South Africa was racially categorized under apartheid. Much of the vestiges of apartheid are still evident today, particularly the geographical separation of people along racial lines. In the Msunduzi Municipality, as was the case under apartheid, the most under resourced communities remains Black townships. I choose to use the term 'Black' to represent African, Indian and Coloureds as per the Black Consciousness Movements characterization of Black as being inclusive of African, Indian and Coloured South Africans. See: The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government (2017/2018).

[2] In this study, I use the term 'under resourced urban communities' to refer to dormitory townships created under apartheid and squatter or informal settlements.

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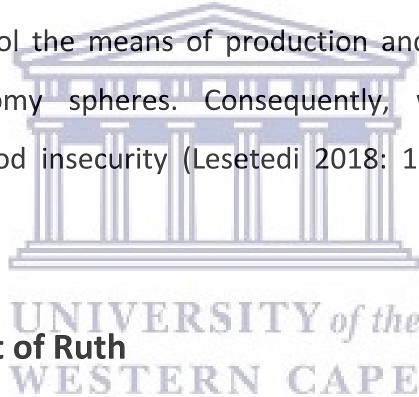
dormitory townships[3] and squatter settlements[4] are severely underdeveloped. Msunduzi is not a wealthy municipality – the average income between poor and low-income category earners is R6000 and R50 000 per annum. A large number of households' access social grants as their only source of cash income. Female centred households are the dominant type in poorer parts of the Msunduzi Municipality and are found to be most vulnerable to food insecurity (The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government 2017/2018: 10). Gender based socio-economic inequalities persist in the Msunduzi Municipality. Historically, South Africa is a patriarchal society with Black people, particularly women most economically disadvantaged and marginalized. Patriarchal ideology favouring male access and control is a key factor in the exploitation of women and the driver of poverty among women. Studies confirm that the challenges women face regarding integration into the economy are structurally driven – women are expected to compete in male dominated environments where men control the means of production and women are relegated to the domestic and informal economy spheres. Consequently, women face high levels of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity (Lesetedi 2018: 193, Govender 2018: 5, Kruger 2017: 23-24).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1.3. Background to the Text of Ruth

The story begins with Naomi, her husband, Elimelech and their two sons. The family left Bethlehem in Judah during a time of famine and went to Moab because there was plenty of food there at the time. In the course of time, Naomi's two sons marry. Elimelech and both sons pass away, and Naomi is left destitute in Moab along with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Upon hearing that God once again blessed Bethlehem with plenty of food, Naomi decided to return home. Early on in the journey back to Bethlehem, Naomi told her daughters-in-law to

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[3] Dormitory townships in apartheid South Africa refers to underdeveloped, racially segregated urban areas. These townships or locations were reserved specifically for Africans, Indians and Coloureds, and divided according to apartheid's racial categorization.

[4] Squatter settlements are generally impoverished buildings or shacks typically made of materials such as mud, wood and salvaged items useful for the construction of makeshift shelters. Squatter settlements are generally characterized by lack of infrastructure such as sanitation, drainage, water supply and electricity. In South Africa, municipalities commonly provide a single tap which serves as the water supply for the entire community. Sanitation is commonly bucket or pit toilets situated some distance from dwellings. Electricity is generally illegally connected by communities since municipalities do not usually provide electricity to squatter settlements.

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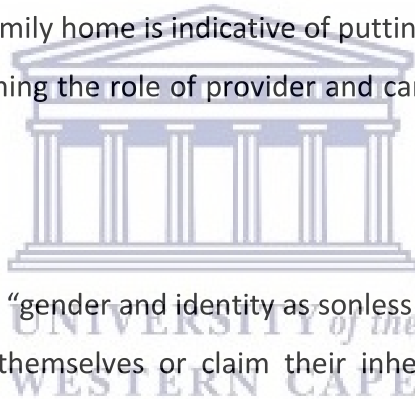
return to their homes because she is unable to provide for them and she is too old to bear more sons whom they can marry in order to be financially stable in a patriarchal world (Sacks 2017: 9). Orpah returned to Moab but Ruth refused to leave her mother-in-law because she was dedicated to Naomi's wellbeing.

The two vulnerable widows arrived in Bethlehem during the time of barley harvest without financial security or protection because in the patriarchal world in which the story unfolds, women were reliant on men for such provisions and protections. Significantly, the driving force behind Elimelech and Naomi's move to Moab was food insecurity in Bethlehem. Similarly, the motivation for Naomi's return to Bethlehem was food insecurity and destitution in Moab. Ruth's refusal to return to her family home is indicative of putting Naomi's welfare ahead of her own self-interest, thereby assuming the role of provider and caretaker of Naomi (Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky 2011: 19).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In Bethlehem, Naomi and Ruth's "gender and identity as sonless widows" meant that they were unable to adequately support themselves or claim their inheritance of land and means of survival (Moyo 2014: 30). As a result, they were at the mercy of the welfare system in ancient Israel. The welfare system was known as gleaning. At harvest time, while grain was being reaped, some was left behind by the harvesters. Ordinarily, this grain would go to waste but in ancient Israel, the poor were allowed to follow the reapers and pick the small amounts of grain the harvesters left behind. Life in Bethlehem for Ruth was a struggle for survival. Ruth went out into the fields of Boaz, a rich landowner, to glean in order to support herself and Naomi. As a young foreign woman, gleaning in the fields was dangerous as Ruth was susceptible to being abused by the townsmen (Yeong-mee 2012: 125). Moreover, since Naomi was too old to work and Ruth's efforts at gleaning alone was inadequate to provide long term sustenance for both women, another solution to their problem of food insecurity was needed.

Fortuitously, while gleaning in the field, Ruth encountered Boaz who took an immediate liking

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to her and offered her special privileges. Ruth was granted permission to glean among the reapers as opposed to gleaning behind them, meaning she was able to access a greater amount of food than other gleaners. When Naomi learnt that Ruth was gleaning in Boaz's field, she saw an opportunity to secure their futures and continue Elimelech's lineage. Since Naomi saw Boaz as an ideal partner for Ruth and a means to permanently solve their problem of food insecurity, she devised a plan that involved Ruth offering herself to Boaz sexually in a daring encounter. Ruth was instructed to bathe and perfume herself and go in secret to the threshing floor where Boaz would be spending the night guarding the harvest (Kolimon 2019: 8). Ruth obeyed Naomi and had a sexual encounter with Boaz on the threshing floor.[5]

Naomi's plan was that Boaz would act as kinsman redeemer,[6] ensuring the redemption of Elimelech's land and food security for both Ruth and Naomi (Dagley 2019: 56). Furthermore, through levirate marriage[7] to Ruth, Elimelech's name would be restored to his inheritance and through a male heir, and food security and stability for Ruth and Naomi would be ensured. Significantly, in acquiescing to Ruth on the threshing floor and being compliant in ensuring Naomi's plan comes to fruition, "Boaz appeared a magnanimous and benevolent man ensuring

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[5] In this study, I interpret the encounter between Ruth and Boaz on the threshing floor as sexual. In my interpretation, I follow scholarship that describes the encounter between Ruth and Boaz as "sexually loaded" and that Ruth and Boaz did initiate a sexual relationship on the threshing floor (Keita and Dyk 2006: 7). Keita and Dyk (2006: 8) note that "the author of Ruth selects vocabulary that makes it clear what the intentions are." The idea of meeting at the threshing floor at night suggests that they became acquainted during the day and met at night on the threshing floor in what Naomi and Ruth anticipated would be a sexual encounter. Naomi's instruction to Ruth to wash and groom is intended to make her "enticing" to Boaz. I interpret the reference to "uncover the place of his feet" as a euphemism for uncovering Boaz' genitals. However, I am aware of the numerous debates and contentions in the field of biblical scholarship regarding the encounter being sexual. For example, Keita and Dyk (2006: 2) note that many scholars interpret the encounter on the threshing floor as simple expediency. Since there was no time to lose and Boaz was winnowing barley and consequently sleeping at the threshing floor, it was much more expedient for Ruth to meet him there. Others interpret Naomi's instruction to Ruth to groom herself as normal hygiene standards for men and women in a context where the climate is extremely hot, and water is scarce. In other words, Naomi's instruction to Ruth was for the purpose of making her presentable and respectable when speaking to Boaz. Some authors maintain that when Naomi instructs Ruth to "uncover the place of his feet" she meant exactly that, and her statement was not a euphemism for genitals. Authors argue that in other biblical texts where genitals are alluded to, the expression reads, "uncover the shame" not "uncover the feet" and should therefore not be construed as an instruction to Ruth to offer herself sexually to Boaz. See Keita and Dyk (2006: 17-32).

[6] A kinsman redeemer is a nearest male blood relative who is obligated to assist a person or family in the event that they become financially unstable and have to sell their property. See: De Vries (2005: 47).

[7] The purpose of levirate marriage was to raise heirs for the dead and to continue their lineage and legacy. See De Waard and Nida (1973).

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the inheritance of a distant relative and taking in a widow and an unfortunate foreigner, going above and beyond the expectations of the law thus cementing his sterling reputation in the community" (Dagley 2019: 57).

1.4. Aims of the Study

1.4.1. General Aim

The aim of this study was to explore the phenomenon of survival sex in the context of food insecurity through communal readings of the book of Ruth with a purposefully selected group of Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality.

1.4.2. Key Research Questions

1. How does CBS support and inspire a liberationist and empowering analysis of the survival strategies of women in the text of Ruth and in the context of food insecure women in the Msunduzi Municipality?

2. What are the survival strategies, experiences and motivations of food insecure women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality?

3. What kinds of theologies are produced when the text of Ruth is brought to bear on the experiences of food insecure women in the Msunduzi municipality?

1.5. Structure of the Study

The thesis is organized into nine chapters. Following the Introduction in Chapter One, I present a brief description of the Msunduzi Municipality as it is located within the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the wider South Africa. I present an overview of the population and the socio-economic status of women. As motivation for the study, I demonstrated the high prevalence of food insecurity in urban South Africa. Moreover, I explained the state of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality and the deficiency of comprehensive research making the link between survival sex and food insecurity. I also outlined my assumption in the planning stages of this

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study, that CBS could garner a more nuanced understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. As background to the study, I summarized the story of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible and presented the practicability of using CBS to investigate survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The aims of the study are presented, and the structure of the thesis is discussed.

In Chapter Two I present the Literature Review. I begin with a consideration of the definitional nuances of survival sex followed by a review of scholarship and the dominant theoretical approaches used in the study of survival sex. I demonstrated how survival sex is subsumed within the discourse on transactional sex in South African literature, resulting in sparse engagement with survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Key theoretical approaches elucidating agency, vulnerability and victimhood in South African literature are considered. This is followed by a review of literature on food insecurity. Next, I consider scholarship regarding CBS and the feasibility of CBS as an appropriate data gathering instrument. This is followed by an examination of how the key theoretical approaches I adopt are presented in the literature. I demonstrate the complementarity of reader-response theory, African Womanism and African Women's Theology in relation to CBS as liberationist modes of engagement.

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In Chapter Three I discuss the theoretical tool kit that informs the study. I demonstrate how reader-response theory, African Womanism and African Women's Theology are used to elucidate survival sex in the context of food insecurity. In emphasising the dynamic and collaborative nature of my theoretical tool kit, I highlight its complementarity to CBS. I establish how the creative processes of reader-response theory interact with CBS and produce liberationist readings of text and context. I demonstrate how African Womanism and African Women's Theology enter into dialogue with the forces of domination for the purposes of emancipation of women from intersecting forms of oppression. I elucidate how multiple layers of oppression are discerned and analysed in the face of the hegemonic configurations of society and how these two theories challenge such hegemonies.

Chapter Four describes the methodology and research design adopted in the study. I detail the

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qualitative, exploratory and empirical approaches I adopt. I discuss reflexivity or the ability to locate oneself in a particular research situation and stress the importance of the researcher having a clear understanding of her role within the process for the purposes of accountability. I discuss issues of positionality and how the researcher's perspective and worldview impact the research process. In the following section I introduce my gatekeeper and present a justification for my choice of gatekeeper and research sample. I also discuss the selection criteria and participant profile. This is followed by a discussion on the importance of ethical research and good ethical conduct within research. Lastly, in this chapter, I discuss data collection and analysis.

In Chapter Five I present CBS. I illustrate how, through the processes of CBS, participants are capacitated to be active subjects within the research through individual and group collaboration. Next, I discuss the history of CBS and the influence of Base Community in Latin America and the Kairos Document in South Africa on the development of CBS. Focusing primarily on its development within the Ujamaa Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal, I discuss the context of struggle under apartheid in which CBS was developed in South Africa. I discuss the commitments of CBS as outlined by Gerald West and present a critique of CBS. Lastly, I present the structure of the CBS programme adapted for use in this study.

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In Chapter Six I emphasise the significance of context in reader-response theory and CBS. I discuss the two distinct reading communities represented in the research and how the three-pronged relationship between two reading communities and the text during CBS highlights the interactional nature of CBS and focus more deliberately on contextual interpretations. This is followed by my reflections as researcher/facilitator on the initial romanticised reading of the text and my facilitation of an alternate, liberationist mode of reading. In a discussion on the shift in participants reading trajectory, I highlight the innovation of the reading strategy of CBS. I then describe how, during a closer, more critical reading of the text, participants begin to consider a more contextually based interpretation. In elucidating the interrelatedness between reader, text and context, I explain that the potential for empirical research and empowerment

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lies in the centrality of context in CBS. This is followed by reflection on my own positionality in the process and its relevance for my understanding of the tools of critical scholarship in CBS. Lastly, I describe what it means to read with flesh and blood readers through the processes of CBS.

In Chapter Seven I address the structural and systemic factors that drive survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. The communal and relational tenets of African Womanism are employed to consider the survival strategies, experiences and motivations of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. I argue that the intersecting of gender, race and class positions women in a vulnerable space, including the domination of their bodies. I illustrate how the feminization of poverty is perpetuated by the normalization of women's struggle through beliefs, customs, religious and cultural affiliations and economic and political factors. In this context, the basis of survival is located in who has access. Relatedly, women's ability to overcome lack is at the core of the use of survival sex. In this sense, survival sex is considered agential because women effectively navigate food insecurity under highly constrained conditions. I discuss how hegemonic masculinities perpetuate survival sex even within the context of marriage as gender inequalities and women's vulnerabilities are constantly reproduced. I highlight the damaging manifestations of sexual abuse related to survival sex in the context of food insecurity and the culpability of parents and guardians in the exploitation of young women and girls. Importantly, I discuss how inadvertent community consent perpetuates silence regarding sexual exploitation.

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In Chapter Eight I address how CBS produces theologies of hope and survival through the lens of African Women's Theology. I examine the theological themes of sin, survival, justice, redemption and hope. I describe the Christian mandate to respond to food insecurity and how the simplistic interpretation of God's presence and action in the world as one of retribution and reward inhibits effective and appropriate ecclesial responses to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The individualizing and moralizing of survival sex serves as a barrier to appropriately addressing issues related to food insecurity. I emphasise how the biblical

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reference to survival sex as foregrounded through CBS, gave participants permission to talk about survival sex as a survival strategy. I describe how ecclesial interpretations promote hegemonic masculinities resulting in the promotion of men as heads of households, the Church and the economy resultantly wielding social and financial power over women. I demonstrate how CBS created a safe space for honest discussions regarding ecclesial interpretations and the need for interpretations that address male hegemony and structural and systemic oppression of women.

Chapter Nine is the final chapter. I conclude by extrapolating the contributions the study makes to the understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. I then discuss some of the limitations of this study and reflect on possible areas for future research.

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Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature pertaining to the exploration of survival sex in the context of food insecurity through CBS. I begin by discussing the definitional nuances regarding survival sex in the literature. Next, I explore how the concept of survival sex is reproduced and maintained in different contexts. I discuss broad trends in the literature to establish how scholars frame the discourse on survival sex and present the main theoretical approaches. I also address the growing body of literature on food insecurity, linking food insecurity to survival sex in South Africa. Finally, I discuss the main methodological approaches scholars have employed and the expediency of CBS in analysing survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

2.2. Definitional Nuances Related to Survival Sex

Sexual exchange is multifaceted and varied. Scholars note that in some instances, terms such as 'prostitution', 'sex work' and 'survival sex' are used interchangeably to describe some form of transactional sex (Formson and Hilhorst 2016: 7). Prostitution according to Hunter (2002: 101), Leclerc-Madlala (2004: 1) and Cole (2004: 579) is a relationship whereby a specified fee (often cash) is negotiated by those who provide sex to clients on a professional basis. Formson and Hilhorst (2016: 7) find that defining transactional sex is not straightforward and is "culturally determined and constructed." Many researchers in sub-Saharan Africa broadly characterize the trade of sex into the two main groupings of prostitution and transactional sex. While prostitution is a formal contract in which sex is exchanged for monetary compensation, transactional sex is the exchange of sex for anything from luxury commodities and requirements such as clothing, cell phones, vehicles, tertiary education and money. Survival sex is generally defined as the exchange of sex for basic subsistence needs such as food and shelter, though it has been noted that the terms 'transactional sex' and 'survival sex' are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, research on survival sex is often subsumed under the category of transactional sex (Formson and Hilhorst 2016: 7, Blommaert 2014: 232, Leclerc-Madlala 2003:

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2). In this study, I define survival sex as the exchange of sex for food in the context of women's financial dependence as a result of systemic and structural inequalities spurred on by overwhelming economic disparity, poverty and lack.

2.3. Broad Patterns in Scholarship on Survival Sex

There are generally no clear distinctions between survival sex and other forms of sexual exchange in the literature. Herrmann (1987) and Goddard (2005), working with the phenomenon of survival sex among children in New Zealand, describes it as the commercial sexual exploitation of children (Herrmann 1987: 523). The term 'survival sex' is used broadly to encompass different types of sexual transactions that take place when adults engage in sexual relations with children and adolescents who are desperate for food, shelter and/or drugs. While sexual exchange is commonly viewed as a transaction entered into freely by both parties, when adolescents and children engage in sex work, it is ultimately sexual abuse. Herrmann (1987: 524) therefore argues that this type of sexual exchange cannot be characterized as prostitution because to do so would gloss over the criminal nature of purchasing sex from minors. Moreover, Goddard (2005: 275) notes that using the term 'prostitution' in this context, fails to reflect the victimization experienced by children resorting to the exchange of sex for basic subsistence needs and/or drugs and erroneously suggests complicity on the part of children in their own abuse.

Saphira (2001: 1) and Saphira and Herbert (2004: 3), also conducted studies on survival sex in New Zealand and maintain that children between the ages of nine and seventeen engage in survival sex for a variety of reasons ranging from the need for subsistence, peer pressure and in the case of transgender youth, lack of employment as a result of prejudice. Homelessness, poverty, family breakdown and drug use are some of the reasons that children turn to survival sex as the only viable option when they find themselves without protective systems, leaving them vulnerable to sexual and other forms of exploitation. A qualitative study by Spurrier and Alpaslan (2017) dealing with child sex tourism identifies survival sex among children as a common practice. The authors argue that the demand for child sex tourism is high and often

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results in children being trafficked for sex or recruited in various locations, particularly from third world countries. These children are often runaways, homeless and living on the streets with no parental or guardian support or care, making them extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Spurrier and Alpaslan 2017: 388). The motivation for children engaging in survival sex is most often desperation for food, shelter, money, gifts and/or drugs. In many instances, children are subjected to heinous sexual abuse and violence (Chettiar et al 2010: 323, Ward and Seager 2010: 89).

Much of the focus of studies related to survival sex among adolescents and young adults is the spread of HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases as well as various forms of abuse (Williams 2010, Heyink 2016, Yates et al 1988, Feitel et al 1992, Greenblatt and Robertson 1993, Kipke 1995, Greene et al 1999, Wagner et al 2001). Several studies identify homelessness and drug addiction as the main reason for resorting to survival sex. Wall and Bell (2011: 424) characterize survival sex as the exchange of sex for food, shelter, drugs, money and other needs and wants. They maintain that survival sex in the United States is prevalent amongst homeless youth and young adults based on demographics such as race, gender, age and sexual orientation. Youth seldom engage in survival sex prior to becoming homeless and increased spells of homelessness increases the probability of turning to survival sex as a subsistence strategy. The main reason for engaging in survival sex is the need for accommodation, the need to support drug addiction and food insecurity (McCarthy and Hagan 1991: 394, Greene et al 1999: 1406, Rice et al 2006: 68, Owen et al 2006: 27, Whitbeck et al 2004: 134). Sanders and McNaughton (2007: 886) found that in the United Kingdom, the lack of, reduction or removal of institutional care often leaves people vulnerable to exploitation, resulting in survival sex as a basic subsistence strategy. Discriminations in the forms of racism, stigmatization and other prejudices prevent social inclusion and drives marginalization and vulnerability. Undocumented migrants are particularly vulnerable to survival sex as they navigate life without institutional support (Balfour and Allen 2014: 3, Bindel et al 2013: 6, Brents and Sanders 2010: 46, Cusick et al 2009: 704, Hartworth et al 2012: 149).

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A phenomenon known as *Bacchus Lady* is identified in one case study from South Korea by Krens (2016). This is a form of survival sex practiced by a certain demographic of vulnerable women. Elderly women who find themselves without social security as a result of divorce, widowhood or abandonment by their children exchange sex for survival clandestinely. The poverty rate of the elderly (65 years and older) in South Korea is 49.6%. Since elderly care in South Korea is based on a system of familial duty, children have an obligation to take care of their parents but over the last few decades the system has begun to deteriorate as some children no longer want to or are able to take care of their parents. Under the *National Basic Living Act* in South Korea, elderly women have the option to apply for alimony but women who have children do not qualify for government assistance. In such situations, some elderly women turn to survival sex as their only option for basic subsistence and survival (Krens 2016: 27-28).

Parallels can be drawn between *Bacchus Lady* in South Korea and the situations women in Moyo's (2010) study find themselves. In her *Widowhood and desperation for food: Retelling Ruth in the context of human trafficking*, Moyo (2010: 3) demonstrates how widows are often left in desperation for survival. Moyo argues that in order for justice for destitute women to be attained, social systems that commoditize women's bodies and leave vulnerable women impoverished must be challenged.

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In many studies from Africa, while the exchange of sex for basic subsistence needs is addressed, it is often subsumed under the literature on transactional sex because the two are often not mutually exclusive. Nigerian scholars, Nnama-Okechukwu and Anazonwu (2020: 39) and Tade and Adekoye (2012), while acknowledging the prevalence of survival sex, focus predominantly on transactional sex as a means to further economic progress. They found that people in their studies, while to some degree, exchange sex for basic subsistence needs, in most instances, are active agents in transactional sexual exchanges where they progress to negotiating for luxury goods and affluent lifestyles. Kwena et al (2012: 10) observes that the gendered structure of the fishing industry in Kenya sustains and maintains the practice of transactional sex and bears an increased associated risk of acquiring HIV. Studies in Kenya also demonstrate that in instances of extreme poverty, women and children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation

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and are often forced to exchange sex for as little as a bag of sugar or tiny bits of fish (Bhalla 2018, Batha 2020). In this context, fishermen exploit women buyers of fish by requiring them to engage in sexual relations in order to secure the right to buy fish (Kwena et al 2012: 11). Formson and Hilhorst (2016: 12) remark that in humanitarian crisis contexts such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, survival sex is predominant as women and girls struggle to meet basic household needs.

Stoebenau et al (2016: 189) found that in Malawi, Swaziland and Mozambique household food insecurity is a driver of survival sex. In Malawi, an issue that has received much attention is the "fish for sex" phenomenon within the fishing trade in the Great Lakes region (Kwena et al 2012, MacPherson 2014). Most related studies stress the seriousness of poverty in this region which leads to the commodification of women's bodies. MacPherson (2014: 218) highlights that grinding poverty is so pervasive that even whole fish is a luxury and often unattainable in sexual trade. This demonstrates the dire state of food insecurity in the region. Women in these contexts find themselves in such calamitous predicaments that they would often exchange sex for small pieces of fish. Known as 'sex for relish', this practice is common during periods of hunger in fishing village communities. During periods when maize prices are very high and the fields not yet ready for harvest; women frequently exchange sex for often very small pieces of fish, also referred to as relish, in order to sustain themselves and their families. These studies suggest that in contexts where grinding poverty exists, women's agency is enormously constrained and gender power relations are extremely pronounced. Under these circumstances, the bargaining power of men who buy sex from women is far greater as they are able to acquire sex even when the exchange is meagre amounts of fish. The knowledge that survival sex is the only option to prevent starvation and death increases men's bargaining power and leads women into deeper destitution (MacPherson 2014: 5).

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In Sub-Saharan Africa, much of the research on sexual exchange is focused on the HIV and AIDS pandemic among women between the ages of fifteen to twenty five (Stoebenau et al 2016, Formson and Hilhost 2016, Leclerc-Madlala 2003, West and Haddad 2016, Wamoyi et al 2019,

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Ranganathan et al 2018, Mampane 2018). The literature indicates that sex work is a vast field of research and up until the last two decades, not much attention was given to the study of transactional sex and its implications for the spread of HIV and AIDS. Sexual exchange is found to be far more widespread, nuanced and complex than had previously been documented in the literature. Moreover, the boundaries between transactional sex and survival sex are frequently blurred as people involved in the practice often move between being in desperate need for subsistence to desiring luxury items, services and even tertiary education as remuneration (Dunkle et al 2004, Halperin and Epstein 2004, Wojcicki 2002, West and Haddad 2016, Norman and Hintze 2005). The studies highlight the need for more research on transactional and survival sex as well as the need to better understand the drivers of risky sexual behaviour.

Stoebenau et al (2016: 189) observes that "the trade of sex is a complex and everyday phenomenon, taking on various forms based on the gendered socio-economic contexts in which it emerges" (Stoebenau et al 2016: 189). The authors note that women who engage in transactional sex are not helpless victims or "immoral social climbers". Moreover, the studies draw attention to the importance of an awareness of the range of systemic issues that influence the practice of transactional sex. Importantly, in an analysis of sex work, consideration must be given to the gendered nature of inequalities women endure and how systemic oppression drives desperation, lack, agency and resourcefulness (Stoebenau et al 2016: 194). Leclerc-Madlala (2003:2) argues that local socio-cultural processes, heterosexual dynamics and global economic forces facilitate the practice of survival sex. Formson and Hilhorst (2016: 10) found that while substantial research was conducted regarding transactional sex among young people, limited research exists regarding transactional sex "in older age groups." Stoebenau et al (2011: 2) and Stoebenau et al (2016: 188) explain that in contexts where the substance of exchange often extends beyond basic needs or progresses from basic needs to a desire to acquire luxury lifestyles, focusing completely on survival sex is not always prudent because it has implications for a deeper analysis of the impact of trading sex as it relates to the prevalence and spread of HIV and AIDS. Research on trading sex relating to HIV and AIDS in South Africa locates survival sex as a sub-category within the discourse on transactional sex. For the purposes of this research, I limit my investigation to the practice of

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survival sex as it relates to women's desperation in the context of structural and systemic disparity that leads to extreme poverty and food insecurity.

2.4. Food Insecurity

Scholarship on food insecurity in South Africa is expansive. South Africa is regarded as a food secure nation with the means to produce enough food and the capacity to import food to supplement deficit. However, as a result of the high levels of inequality in the country, "contrasting scenarios" of food security exist. In other words, while the country may be food secure at national level, there is rampant food insecurity within particular demographics at household level (Statistics South Africa 2019: 6). Crush and Franye (2010: 36) and Battersby-Lennard et al (2015: 2) argue that urban populations in South Africa are growing rapidly and huge upsurges in urban populations are projected for the future. Moreover, only 45.6% of South Africans are food secure, 28.3% are at risk of hunger and 26% experience hunger or are food insecure (Naicker and Mathee 2015: 270, Crush and Caesar 2014: 170, Shisana et al 2013: 10, Frayne et al 2009: 40).

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Scholars confirm that the increasingly urban manifestation of food insecurity is a worrying trend with 64% of South Africa already urbanized and urbanization expected to reach 77% by 2050 (Franye et al 2010: 43, Battersby and Haysom 2019: 4). Large numbers of urban dwellers live in informal settlements and have scant access to infrastructure and social services, hence, inequitable social structures put excessive strain on urban households. In addition, widespread unemployment and rising inflation severely hampers livelihoods (Crush and Frayne 2010: 36, Dodd and Nyabvudzi 2014: 117). In a study of eleven southern African cities in nine counties in sub-Saharan Africa, researchers found high levels of food insecurity with 76% of overall households in the study being food insecure. Strikingly, the Msunduzi Municipality showed a higher than average level of food insecurity at 87% of households being food insecure (Franye et al 2009: 15).

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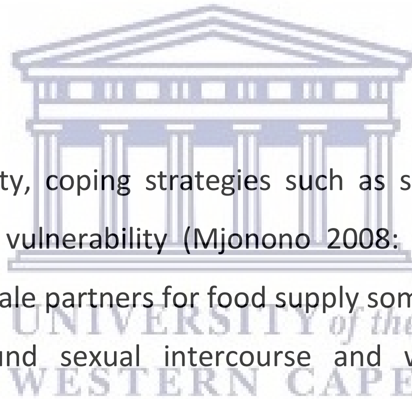
In a society that is largely patriarchal with clearly defined gender roles, female centred households are severely economically vulnerable, needing to develop agential and pragmatic ways of securing food. With the high unemployment rate and large households to feed, often with only the small amount received through child grants and old age pensions, women desperately seek out additional sources of income and other ways of acquiring food (Dodson et al 2012: 23). Structural and systemic injustices coupled with rampant corruption and governmental mismanagement perpetuates poverty and food insecurity (Battersby 2015: 1). Studies indicate that poverty and lack of income are principal causes of food insecurity in South Africa. In addition, high food prices and limited purchasing power has a damaging effect on low income households with female headed households in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape being most affected (Rudolf et al 2012: 15).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In the context of food insecurity, coping strategies such as selling of assets or engaging in survival sex deepens women's vulnerability (Mjonono 2008: 23, Dunkle et al 2004: 1582). Scholars note that reliance on male partners for food supply sometimes results in male partners controlling circumstances around sexual intercourse and women often stay in violent relationships because of their dependence on their partners for food, accommodation and other basic subsistence needs. This is particularly prevalent among vulnerable women with children. The lack of control in such situations prevents women from successfully negotiating condom use, as many women report being threatened with violence and losing access to food if they insist on condom use (Chop et al 2017: 935). The literature on food insecurity points to an association between women's economic powerlessness and vulnerability in the face of hegemonic[8] power imbalances and structural and systemic oppression.

[8] Hegemony can be described as the subordination of particular groups based on dominant ideologies. Hegemony is established when the dominant enforces levels of hierarchy over subordinate groups, resulting in adverse conditions for the subordinate. "As such, hegemony is intricately related to power, ideology and struggle". See Herrmann, (2017: 1).

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2.5. Theoretical Approaches Relating to Survival Sex

Drawing on a range of rational choice approaches[9] in research, such as bounded rationality[10], network theory[11], and the theory of sexual exchange[12], Baumeister and Vohs (2004), de la Torre et al (2010), Rosen and Venkatesh (2008) and Durant (2015) demonstrate how individuals actively negotiate their lives within highly-constrained settings shaped by problematic substance addiction, extreme hardship, and lack of alternate opportunities. Developed by Baumeister and Vohs (2004), the theory of sexual exchange suggests that the suppliers of sex ultimately determine the exchange they will accept as payment for their participation in various sexual acts, particularly when women exchange sex. Emanating from the supposition that a high value is placed on female sexuality, sex with a woman is understood as a resource which men must pay a high price to acquire. However, in situations where options are extremely limited and existence is characterized by poverty and lack, the exchange is often not dependent on the cultural context in which sex is exchanged but on the bargaining power of the one exchanging sex. In such situations, the supposed cultural value given to various characteristics of the individual is not pertinent but rather, desperation drives the exchange. Baumeister and Vohs (2004: 347) and de la Torre (2010: 72) note that in instances where men exchange resources for sex, the price of sex is often linked to women's economic situations. Where women are severely economically disadvantaged, sex is exchanged for whatever resources can be garnered. Women are often not full-time prostitutes and may hold low paying jobs or have access to meagre incomes. However, this is not adequate to support themselves and they would sometimes exchange sex for money or resources.

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[9] The assumptions of rational choice approaches are that people in particular situations take particular actions as rational beings. People choose their actions based on opportunities or constraints they experience, doing the best they can under particular circumstances. Structures and norms dictate courses of action. Rational choice theory seeks to explain how, even though resources may be limited, situations that emerge may be dealt with through making rational choices based on their unique set of circumstances. See Ogu (2013: 93).

[10] Within the framework of bounded rationality, access to information and ability to calculate consequences is limited. Vulnerable people may sometimes pursue an action that will satisfy minimum requirements to achieving a goal. In other words, decisions are made based on limited information under immediate contextual constraints. See Gourley (2009).

[11] Within the framework of network theory people are seen as linked to other people through a series of social ties within a broader social network. See Wasserman and Faust (1994).

[12] The theory of sexual exchange suggests that the key suppliers of sex ultimately negotiate the fee that will be accepted as payment. See Baumeister and Vohs (2004).

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Rosen and Venkatesh (2008: 425-426) illustrate that when factors such as "limited resources, education and information" characterise existence, "pure rationality" is not always possible and people make decisions based on "bounded rationality" which produces fast and immediate relief. As a means of satisfying immediate needs and challenges, sex work becomes a viable option as it offers some resources, temporary stability and autonomy. Lack of employment opportunities in some urban settings, and class, race and demographic compositions of particular areas contributes to joblessness and urban poverty. This, together with structural and cultural factors, ensures exclusion from "the mainstream market" resulting in people acting from the position of bounded rationality because they are driven by sheer desperation and have limited negotiation power. They argue that while the decision to engage in sex work may appear irrational to an outsider, in the face of overwhelming lack and limited or no opportunity for meaningful income generation, the decision is rational. Similarly, Calhoun and Weaver (1996: 223), in an ethnographic exploration of young men selling sex found that participants in their study generally weigh the benefits of selling sex against its liabilities in the context of socio-economic struggle. Bounded rationality, they argue, takes place under constrained economic conditions.

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Durant (2015: 62) employed network theory to explain how people are linked through social ties within broader social networks. He argues that participants in his study are either constrained or have access to opportunities based on their networks in the street market context of his study. Through people's positions within social networks, they are able to mobilize resources, access information and maintain influence within wider networks. Network theory recognizes the value of social connection as social capital. It therefore acknowledges reliance on peer connections. These connections are seen as an asset that facilitates negotiation of survival for sex workers as they navigate various hardships and substance addictions (Durant 2015: 63). Network theory also facilitates a consideration of the levels of exploitation and abuse of sex workers. The "marginalization" of sex workers and the "normalization" of the abuse they endure is foregrounded. Importantly, Durant observes that

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peer connections also provide an exit route for people wanting to withdraw from sex work as they become privy to community intervention programmes and gain access and awareness of available resources (Durant 2015: 65).

Shannon et al (2008: 914) and Argento (2009: 2-3) theorize that structural violence[13] through the patriarchal lack of institutional support to women is the main factor contributing to the practice of survival sex and its related difficulties. The absence of basic subsistence needs and essential services, they argue, contributes to a myriad of social problems, including the spread of HIV and other communicable diseases as sex for survival becomes the only viable option for subsistence. Exploitation subjugates and subordinates women on a global scale and affects every sphere of women's existence. Structural violence occurs independently of individual behaviours but has a crippling effect on the day to day lives of individuals with its effects being normalized in societies. Through interaction with the ideological vice of patriarchy, religion, culture, economics and politics disenfranchise women, affecting every level of life from the domestic to the public spheres. The effects of structural violence on vulnerable women leads to crippling poverty, dependence on men and lack of even the most basic of resources. In such contexts, survival sex becomes a viable option in the struggle against hunger and the need for basic subsistence.

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Krens (2016: 4) put forward three paradigms for understanding sex work in academic literature, the oppressive paradigm, the empowerment paradigm and the polymorphous paradigm. Sex work as an expression of patriarchal gender relations is seen as belonging to the oppressive paradigm with primarily negative connotations, mainly as a form of violence against women. The empowerment paradigm is seen as sex work for mutual gain, benefitting both partners.

[13] See Galtung (1969: 167-191), Galtung (1990: 291-305). Structural violence is cast as a theory of violence based on the recognition that direct, personal violence is only one of three shapes which violence assumes. The other two categories of violence, namely structural (or indirect) and cultural violence are present in society in subtler, but not less damaging ways. For instance, Galtung acknowledges that poverty (structural violence) or media glorification of violence (cultural violence) are also forms of violence. For Galtung, only the elimination of violence at all levels can lead to true holistic living. Understanding how structural violence plays out in societies is essential in understanding the violent nature of poverty.

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Krens posits that most of the problems associated with the empowerment paradigm are as a result of the criminalization of the practice of sex work. This has a negative effect on sex workers, particularly women, causing undue harm and endangerment. Favouring the polymorphous paradigm, Krens argues that the oppressive paradigm is shallow and fails to take into account that sex work is sometimes voluntary and that some women who engage in the practice foreground their own agency in the practice of sex work. For Krens, the empowerment paradigm is equally flawed because sex work should not be viewed solely in a positive light as some women and men are coerced into the practice and experience violence and oppression as a result of it.

Krens (2016: 6-11) argues for the polymorphous paradigm which takes into account the diversity surrounding issues of sex work. The polymorphous paradigm takes into account variables or different reasons for entering into the practice of sex work. Sex work is not just a simple construction that can be identified as either evil or empowering. Variables such as location, exploitation, job satisfaction, motivation and victimization are important considerations when determining the nature and impetus for engaging in sex work. Age, ethnicity, race, social class and the diversity of clients all play a pivotal role in how sex work of any kind should be analysed. Advocating for the legalization of sex work, Krens maintains that there exists a dire need for the elimination of dangerous forms of sex work such as clandestine survival sex practiced by women in desperation for sustenance and shelter. This surreptitious practice, argues Krens, is driven by unrealistic legislation that further disenfranchises the most vulnerable. Krens posits that the legalization of sex work would eliminate dangerous forms of sex work such as clandestine survival sex in South Korea. The *Bacchus Lady* phenomenon raises questions about unjust and archaic patriarchal systems that force women to resort to desperate measures such as survival sex in exchange for basic subsistence needs (Krens 2016: 30-34).

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Drawing on thirty years of research on sexual exchange, Leclerc-Madlala (2004: 4) posits that many women trade sex mainly for consumption purposes and “are active agents, entrepreneurs, who deliberately exploit their partner(s)”. Using Foucault’s (1979) theory of

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“power as being more nuanced than a one-way hierarchical relationship between dominant and subordinate”, Leclerc-Madlala suggests that those women who determinedly choose multiple partners in order to gain material comforts are fully aware that they are acting in a calculating and exploitative way. Leclerc-Madlala (2004: 16-17) interprets this as a “pragmatic adaptation” to costly urban living even though it may come at great risk. Women are thus able to view their sexuality in a more instrumental way. Such relationships afford women a certain degree of power and may enable them to take control of their own lives and as such, is indicative of women’s agency.

Stoebenau et al (2016: 10) concurs with Leclerc-Madlala’s view and adds that factors influencing the surge in transactional sexual relationships are “rapid globalization with opened markets, expanded importation, and increased visibility of consumer goods” which spurs on a consumer culture, income inequality and unemployment. Wamoyi et al (2019: 11) notes that transactional sex is a practice through which young women, especially, can access material goods associated with a modern lifestyle to improve their social status. Stavrou and Kaufman (2000) also make the link between transaction sex and economic gain.

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Leclerc-Madlala (2004: 16-17) warns that transactional sexual exchanges of this nature might become more normative in the future if women do not become greater participants in the economy and controllers of financial resources. Hunter (2002: 101) cites the “privileged economic position of men” and the “masculine discourses” that place high value on men having multiple sexual partners as a driver of transactional sex. Hunter further argues that sexual trade of this nature “can challenge and reproduce patriarchal systems”. Blommaert (2014: 18) maintained that the negotiating power of women who exchange sex for material gain is limited and largely remains with the men they engage because men still have the economic upper hand. Stoebenau et al (2016) put forward three distinct paradigms emerging from the literature from Sub-Saharan Africa with particular focus on South Africa:

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- **The vulnerable victim and sex for basic needs paradigm** (Stoebenau et al 2016: 188)

Within the vulnerable victim paradigm, poverty and women's economic dependence on men is explored. Drawing on the idea of "hegemonic masculinity"[14] the vulnerable victim paradigm demonstrates how this dominant form of masculinity reproduces gender inequality and disenfranchises women and children to the point of desperation and reliance on men for economic support and stability. Women are depicted as vulnerable victims in the face of gendered structural inequalities. This perspective was explored in-depth much earlier (pre 2000) by social scientists and academics but recent research within the paradigm is primarily conducted by NGO's and agenda-setting donors (Bhalla 2018, Batha 2020). With an increasing awareness of research mainly focusing on Africans as helpless, starving victims without agency and the growing HIV and AIDS pandemic, the focus began to shift post 2000. However, research conducted using this paradigm found that food insecurity is a key driver of survival sex among under resourced women. The unequal balance of resources and structural and systemic inequalities leads to limited access and options for under resourced women.

- **The powerful agent and sex for improved status paradigm** (Stoebenau et al 2016: 189)

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Generally, around the early 2000s, scholars increasingly began to critique the vulnerable victim paradigm, maintaining that the substance of exchange extends beyond basic needs and that women often engage in transactional sex in order to gain economic and/or social capital. These women may move from a place of relative depravation to place of acquiring goods related to a modern lifestyle and vice versa. So, within the framework of sexual exchange, it is not uncommon for women to exchange sex for food because they are food insecure as well as for luxury items. Within this paradigm, women who engage in transactional sex are seen as active agents, creating new forms of social power by increasing their access to economic and social capital. In this way, women are able to dismantle "traditional gendered assumptions in relationships". However, the debate continues to rage on whether transactional sex is agential action on the part of women who trade sex or whether it merely perpetuates the status quo of

[14] Hegemonic masculinity is the culturally idealized, socially acceptable, superior and privileged form of masculinity found within patriarchal cultures. It is the highest ranking in the hierarchy of masculinities and is used to describe how particular groups of men hold positions of power and wealth and legitimate and reproduce dominance. See: Connel (2005: 99), Carrigan et al. (2002).

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male dominance and superiority (Stoebenau et al 2016: 189-190, Leclerc Madlala 2004, 2008).

- **The sex and material expression of love paradigm** (Stoebenau et al 2016: 190)

This paradigm takes into account that transactional sex also occurs within emotionally intimate relationships. It brings into sharp focus the notion that love and money are inextricably linked in romantic relationships including transactional sex relationships. It emphasizes the prevailing view within heteronormative relationships that men are breadwinners and women are reproductive labour. Money is therefore often "the language of love". The exchange of gifts or money is often the strongest indication of commitment within a relationship. The dominant belief is that men provide materially. This providence is seen as an expression of love and points towards the need to address gendered assumptions and beliefs about women's subordinate positions within relationships.

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In this study, I argue that the historic oppression promulgated through colonialism and apartheid as well as systemic and structural oppression perpetuated in the present dispensation continues to subordinate and subjugate Black women in particular. Such oppression continues to disempower women, inflicting grinding poverty, destitution and food insecurity. Therefore, while the motivations and repercussions of transactional sex are important areas of investigation, the motivations and repercussions of the practice of survival sex is equally as important and pertinent and warrants sustained investigation. I argue that the pressures that drive survival sex among vulnerable women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality is motivated by food insecurity and basic subsistence needs and therefore decidedly different from the motivations that drive transactional sex in South Africa. In isolating survival sex as a singular category, I foreground the inherent inequalities in South African societies that lead to survival sex in the context of food insecurity that may not necessarily be given sufficient attention when subsumed under the discourse on transactional sex. Below is a graph that demonstrates the nuances and complexities inherent within transactional sexual relationships and succinctly captures how survival sex is often weaved into the discourse on transactional sex:

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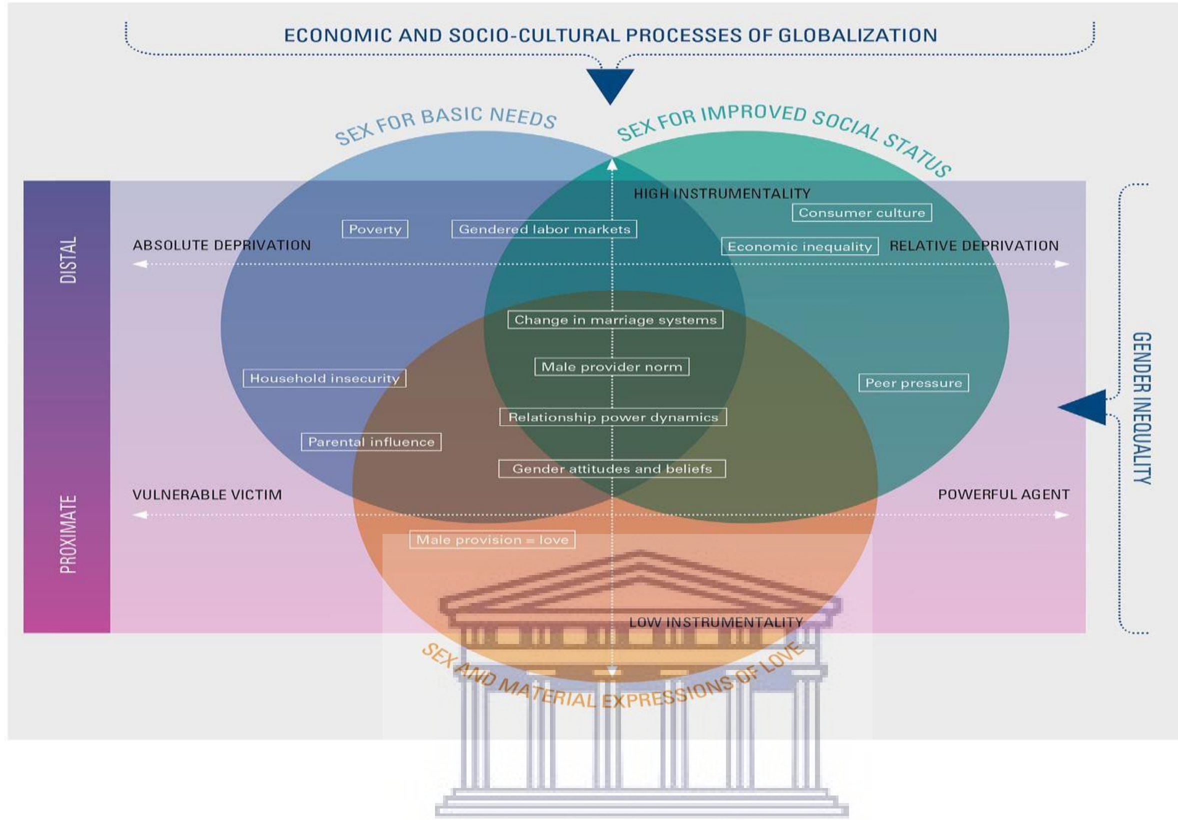

(Stoebenau et al 2016: 192).

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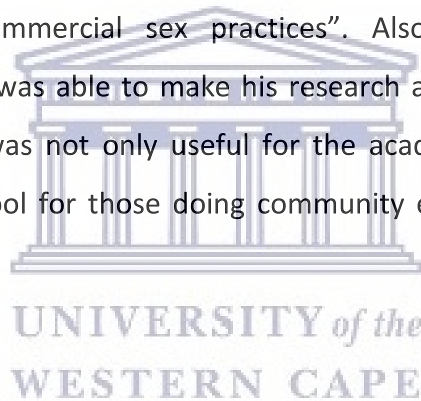
2.6. Methodological Approaches Relating to Survival Sex

In the previous section, I focused on the theoretical approaches that have been employed to study the phenomenon of survival sex. In this section I focus on just some of the methodological approaches that have been employed. Durant (2015: 9) used ethnography to explore the street sex market in Dandenong, Australia. As an "interpretive, discovery-based approach" Durant was able to garner a deep understanding of the lived experiences of people trading sex in Dandenong. Through the use of a range of tools and strategies under the umbrella of ethnography, Durant developed a thick description of his research participants, their geographical location as well as the development of their unique sub-culture within the wider social milieu (Durant 2015: 57). In employing an ethnographic approach, Durant "shed light on under-researched commercial sex practices". Also, through the processes of ethnographic research, Durant was able to make his research accessible to a wider audience. This meant that his research was not only useful for the academic study of trading sex for survival but also served as a tool for those doing community engagement work with people trading sex in similar situations.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Adopting a feminist empirical approach, Singh (2018: 52) places emphasis on the "participatory, collaborative, change-orientated and empowering" aspects of the method. To that end, her inquiry highlights the research participants as active agents within the study. Singh emphasizes the importance of the lived realities, perceptions and experiences of participants. Singh's research is concerned with making a contribution to "applied knowledge" aimed at assisting the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia to better understand the phenomenon of prostitution in their context. Singh anticipates that through engagement with her research, the Evangelical Church of Ethiopia would gain a deeper understanding and become more involved in ministry to women affected by prostitution. The methodological approach is therefore praxis orientated, aimed at addressing the multiple layers of oppression of women who resort to prostitution as a survival strategy in Ethiopia. The approach highlights that the researcher is not neutral but takes a preferential option for the women represented in the study. Singh argues that the

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adoption of a feminist empirical approach makes it both accessible and relevant for both the Evangelical Church of Ethiopia and the women affected by prostitution, “not just the scholarly community” (Singh 2018: 51).

Hill (2019: 11) used a multimethod approach, employing both ethnography and life history method. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were the techniques employed to gain awareness of the survival strategies of women prostitutes in Zambia. Hill explored contextually based issues around the phenomenon of prostitution and gives “recognition to the voices of women” represented in the study. Drawing on African feminisms and womanisms, Hill deliberately framed her interview questions in a way that was cognizant of the “misconceptions of African women that often appear in “white texts”. Resultantly, Hill’s methodological processes did not make assumptions about the research participants being “victims” or “subjugated” but rather, sought to explore the impact of Zambia’s colonial past on the practice of prostitution by foregrounding the voices of the research participants (2019: 70).

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As can be seen from the brief survey of methodological approaches ranging from feminist empirical inquiry, ethnography to life history approach, the methods employed are concerned with developing contextually based understandings of sex work, whether it’s prostitution, transactional sex or survival sex or to varying degrees, a combination of all.

In this study I set out to use contextual Bible study (CBS) as a method of data production. CBS’s value lies in its ability to transform biblical texts into literary platforms upon which community concerns and social justice issues are explicated from the perspectives of socio-political, socio- cultural, socio-religious and socio-economic oppression. In this study, I argue that employing CBS as a data production method offers a more nuanced and detailed examination of the phenomenon of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The method was first used as a resource to engender collaboration between socially engaged biblical

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scholars and faith communities for the purposes of personal and community transformation (West 1993: 24). Its original intention was not to use the resource as a methodological instrument for the purposes of academic research but the liberation of marginalized people from all forms of oppression. However, CBS can be used as a methodology because its processes create an integrated and rigorous way of analysing social issues against the backdrop of structural and systemic oppression as is expressed in the excerpt bellow:

> In our social analysis the Ujamaa Centre[15] [working with the CBS method] recognises that individuals and structures need to be changed. The Church has tended to emphasize the individual, but the Bible has much to say about evil and sinful systems and structures and the need to change them. Contextual Bible studies deal with both the individual and systemic…contextual Bible study emphasises the systemic dimensions of our lives and the systemic dimensions of the Bible, bringing these two into dialogue through the contextual Bible study process… The work of other 'socially engaged biblical scholars' informs our offerings, particularly the work that takes the structural or systemic dimensions of life seriously. Our life in 'the south' or 'third world' is indelibly shaped by overlapping systems of structural injustice, or structural sin (The Ujamaa Centre 2014: 6, 28).

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A number of works by Gerald West and the Ujamaa Centre reflect the appropriateness of CBS in addressing the effects of structural and systemic oppression on the lived realities of subjugated people. Amongst the earliest of West's academic works related to CBS are *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (West 1991), *Difference and Dialogue: Reading the Joseph Story with Poor and Marginalized Communities in South Africa*, (West 1994) and *The Dumb Do Speak: Articulating Insipient Readings of the Bible in Marginalized Communities* (West 1996). More recent works include, *Reading Other-wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with their Local Communities:*

[15] The Ujamaa Centre is a project located at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Religion, Philosophy and Classics Department. It serves as an interface between academic biblical and theological scholarship and faith communities. See: http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx. I will discuss the development, history and work of the Ujamaa Centre in greater detail in Chapter Five.

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An Introduction (West 2007), *"Leadership and Land": A Very Contextual Interpretation of Genesis 37-50 in KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa* (West 2011) and *Between the Text and Trauma: Reading the Epilogue of Job with People Living with HIV* (West 2014). Among West's academic work in conjunction with other scholars are, *"Reading With" African Overtures: An Exploration of the Interface between Critical and Ordinary readings of the Bible* (West and Dube 1996), *"Why are you sitting there?" Reading Matthew 20:1-6 in the Context of Casual Workers in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa* (West and Zwane 2013), *The Medicine of God: What People Living with HIV and AIDS Want (and Get) from the Bibl*e (West and Zengele 2006) and *Boaz as Sugar Daddy: Re-reading Ruth in the Context of HIV* (West and Haddad 2016).

Among the surveyed literature above is readings with poor and marginalized communities, readings with local communities, reading in the context of HIV, reading with casual workers and reading in the context of transactional sex. In these works, an analysis of particular social concerns is conducted through a range of structured and systemic questions, enabling the critical dialogue of people's lived reality and a particular selected biblical text. The primary focus is transformation of structural and systemic vices and institutions that oppress and disenfranchise people and the primary area of investigation is ideological oppression. Context is key and CBS recognizes the multi-dimensional layers of reality that impact self, society and biblical interpretation in a particular social context (West 2015a). The scholarship above elucidates the expediency of CBS to contribute additional insight into the lived experiences of individuals as well as the structured and systemic causes of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality.

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2.7. Conclusion

The literature review highlights the nuances in the scholarly discourse on sex work and the limited engagement with the issue of survival sex in South Africa in the last two decades. The review of literature reveals that because of the growing HIV and AIDS pandemic since the early 2000s, much of the literature on trading sex deals with the prevalence and spread of HIV. While

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some work has been done linking food insecurity and HIV as it relates to survival sex, there is limited engagement with food insecurity as a driver of survival sex. Additionally, a large percentage of research on survival sex is subsumed under the research on transactional sex focusing predominantly on the consumerist and materialist drivers of transactional sex. Moreover, the scholarship on food insecurity indicates that even though South Africa is considered a food secure nation, a large percentage of the population is food insecure at household level. Since women in South African societies are generally responsible for accessing and preparing food, the brunt of food insecurity rests on their shoulders. This cements the need for more research linking survival sex and food insecurity in South Africa. In this chapter, I also discussed theoretical and methodological approaches in scholarship and presented a justification for using the religious resource of CBS. I argue that CBS contributes significant insight and enhances the current body of knowledge regarding survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

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Chapter Three

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

This study utilizes Reader-response Theory, African Womanism and African Women's Theology within a feminist research paradigm as the theoretical basis for addressing the primary research question. The theoretical tool kit, together with CBS, enabled a complementary understanding of how food insecurity is a driver of survival sex in the context of sustained structural and systemic oppression of Black women from under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality. Operating from the premise that patriarchy functions differently as a result of women's social characteristics, the complexities of women's oppression was explored within the social categorizations of race, class, culture, and gender (Plaatjies Van Huffel 2011: 8). Reader-response theory was used to capture the nuances in the interpretation of survival sex in the context of food insecurity utilizing the religious resource of CBS as a data gathering instrument. African Womanism provided historical context to Black women's experience of struggle from the perspective of ideological hegemony and afforded a detailed exploration and understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. African Women's Theology was adopted as an appropriate lens for the examination of the ecclesial interpretations of the theological themes of sin and survival, justice, redemption and hope related to survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

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3.2. Reader-response Theory

Theologians have over many decades drawn on reader-response theory in the interpretation of biblical texts. Taking a reader centred approach, reader response theory highlights the active participation of the reader in the production of meaning of texts (Inan and Boldan 2018: 64). Venkatesan (2009: 123) argues that reader-response theory allows context to inform particular readings. West (2008: 3) notes that the reality of the reader's world is an important aspect in the reading of a text and that reality brings the reader and the text into critical dialogue. Corroborating this claim, Ukpong (2000: 17) affirms that collaboration between reader, text and context creates space for active participation in meaning making based on the lived realities of

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the readers and the structural and systemic factors that contribute to particular social concerns. The reader is therefore a significant counterpart of the text.

The partnership between reader and text enables a critique of the way things are and imagines more equitable alternatives (Sipe, 2008: 7). Brueggemann (1993: 62) affirms that different ways of reading biblical texts are essential based on context and social location. Within such contexts, the reader's imagination is engaged. This imaginative engagement with the text is described as a practice of "receiving, processing and ordering," that leads to liberating moments where the text becomes material that is useful to the reader and is directly about the reader (Ford 2015: 22). Drawing on Fish's (1980)[16] idea of "interpretive communities," and Rosenblatt's (2005: 40) "transactional theory", the reader and her/his particular engagement with the text is described as a transaction between the text and the reader. Parisien (2014: 40) posits that given the introspective nature of close readings of texts, texts may move and persuade readers in different ways at different times. Readers may invariably respond differently to the same text based on different modes of reading. For Rosenblatt (1995, 2005), the text does not impose meaning on the reader. The reader too does not create meaning out of the text. Meaning emerges from the relationship the reader develops with the text in the reading process. In the interaction between reader and text, the value and meaning of human experience is explored. In this process, both reader and text have a direct impact on each other, creating a dynamic collaboration in which meaning is produced through a transaction between the reader and the text (Kim: 2013: 30).

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Interpretations of the text is dependent on the reader's perception and processing of data to form what Iser (1978: 107) refers to as "recreation" which inspires responses from the reader. Through reading the text in a structured and systematic way (West 1993: 21), using the tools of CBS, participant interpretations were privileged as they began to read the text through the lens

[16] Fish argues that the reader is directed to read in a particular way by their wider community. The particular community either validates or invalidates the reader's reading and meaning derived. For Fish, multiple meanings do exist, but it is the "interpretive community" not the text that produces and validates meaning. See Fish (1980), Fish (1970).

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of their own experiences and knowledge rather than the typical readings of particular texts they encounter through their Church traditions. This process created a new encounter with the text that participants have often not previously considered or heard of, making the entire process exciting, new and ground-breaking. In this study I employ reader-response theory to investigate how a liberationist approach to reading the biblical text of Ruth through CBS produces contextual interpretations of survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

3.3. African Womanism

I employ African Womanism to explore the link between structural and systemic inequalities and African women's socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political oppression as it relates to survival sex as a subsistence strategy. Scholarship in the field focuses on how embedded patriarchal oppression promulgated through colonialism, apartheid and present day structural and systemic inequalities pervade every aspect of Black women's lives (Kolawole 2004, Ogunyemi 1985). Were (2017) for example, examined the subjective identities in African women's political autobiographies. Arguing that African women's political autobiographies is a site where African women's political womanhood is deconstructed, Were challenges the dominant ideological discourses on African women's political identities and argues that knowledge production within these discourses produces conceptions of African womanhood that silences and renders invisible African women's political agency. Suggesting that African Womanism is a decolonizing force, Coetzee (2017) argues that faces and voices within African Womanism have been rendered invisible and inaudible in dominant processes and sites of knowledge production in sub-Saharan Africa. African Womanism, argues Coetzee, occupies a unique epistemological position able to subvert and rupture dominant systems of knowledge production.

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3.3.1. Divergence from Western Feminisms[17] and Womanisms[18]

Gender theory has been the subject of enduring deliberation and debate. From feminisms to womanisms, the global ambition remains to address the needs of women worldwide. Feminisms in particular have a long history. Broadly speaking, within feminism, women are understood to be fully human, not subordinate or inferior and entitled to equal rights and privileges enjoyed by male counterparts (Bellis 2007: 6). However, at its inception, Western feminisms spoke to the needs, concerns and struggles experienced by White women and snubbed experiences, concerns and needs of American women of colour and women from other parts of the world. This led to the emergence of feminisms and womanisms tailored for specific contexts in America and Africa. As theoretical constructs that emerged through the understanding of a more multifaceted net of institutional inequalities experienced by women based on intersectional issues such as race, class gender and ethnicity, womanisms and feminisms were designed to integrate specific areas of social intersections distinct to particular demographics. African Womanism for example, integrated economic, cultural, political religious and national aspects relevant within particular African locales (Ogunyemi 1985: 64, Bellis 2007: 7).

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3.3.2. The Development of African Feminisms

Developed as resistance to Western feminisms, African feminisms are shaped by opposition to colonial rule and ideologies. As such, its focus is on the larger context of repression and exploitation of both African women and African men (Maerten 2004: 2). While Western

[17] The feminist movement began in the 1960s as a women's organization, formed by women in order to fight for women's rights and to liberate women from patriarchal dominance. There are various strands of feminism. Radical feminism acknowledges the patriarchal nature of all societies and see men as the source of women's oppression. Radical feminism is commonly associated with White, intellectual middle-class women. Liberal feminism takes cognizance of the cultural oppression of women but has some conceptual flaws. Liberal feminism's demand for equality rather than equity has received strong criticism from women's movements and feminist scholars. Marxist feminism is concerned with issues of class and sees class as a source of social inequality. For Marxist feminism, the economy is the originator of women's oppression. The movement is criticized for not being able to conceive of the oppression of women outside the structures of capitalist production. See Napikoski, L. (2019).

[18] In view of the multiplicity of forms of feminism and womanism, I use the terms 'feminisms' and 'womanisms' to indicate their plurality.

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feminisms are concerned with disrupting, deconstructing and challenging the status quo of male dominance, African feminisms are concerned with issues of collaboration, negotiation and compromise. African feminisms offer strong resistance against Western feminisms outcry against issues such as female circumcision in African cultures. African feminisms also resist the exclusion of men in Western feminisms and actually invite men to be co-collaborators with them in the fight for justice and emancipation of women from various forms of oppression (Nnaemeka 1998: 6). Focusing primarily on debates specific to the African continent, African feminisms prioritize race over gender, arguing that it is a more pressing issue in the African context (Cunningham 2006: 56). African feminists also argue that Western feminisms hold negative assumptions about African women, characterizing them as having too many hungry children and constantly begging, as is typical of third world contexts (Nnaemeka 1998: 30). African feminisms are grounded in resistance to Western feminisms (Nnaemeka 1998: 6).

3.3.3. The Development of African Womanism

While African Womanism resists the use of the term 'feminism', it is not a resistance to African feminisms. In fact, African Womanism supports African feminisms as "collaborative and supportive indigenous movements". African Womanism posits that there is a need to move away from Western terminologies because of its associations with Western feminisms (Hill 2019: 41). Ogunyemi developed African Womanism to address the specific concerns of women in Africa (Ogunyemi 1985, Kolawole 1997, Makombe 2018). African scholarship contends that American womanisms were constructed for the American context and as such, not always universally valid (Ogunyemi 1996: 133, Arndt 1998: 4, Ampadu 2006: 3). Furthermore, American womanisms were presented as useful for Black women the world over. Many scholars such as Ogunyemi (1985), Kolawole (1997) and Nnaemeka (1998) challenge the short-

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sightedness of these forms of womanisms and argue for a womanism that is contextually and demographically representative of African women in Africa. Ogunyemi (1985: 68-69) claims to have developed African Womanism independently of Alice Walker's development of African American Womanism.

Conceptualized for the African American context of oppression, African American Womanism is a theory designed by Alice Walker in 1983 in order to address diasporic African women's concerns overlooked in Western feminist thought. Womanism is seen as both an identity lens and as a tool of analysis which highlights the racialized nature of experience and foregrounds social, political and cultural issues in the conceptualization of gender. Walker challenges Western feminism's propensity to create distance between women and men and opines that Womanism pursues collaboration with both men and women in order to address common concerns. Walker (1983 xi-xii) describes a womanist as "a Black feminist or feminist of colour" embodying the following characteristics:

> … willful behavior, courageous, audacious, - acting grown up, responsible, in-charge, serious. - a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility... and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist... Loves Music. Loves Dance. Loves the moon. Loves the folk. Loves herself. Regardless. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to Lavender.

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Walker's womanist framework, while it is said to have relevance for Black women across the globe, is designed for the American context (Ampadu 2006: 3). As such, it received scathing criticism from some scholars in Africa for not being relevant for women in Africa (Makombe 2018: 110). Blay (2008: 63) for example, posits that in Walker's "depiction of female circumcision and consequently African *culture*[19] and people", her sentiments are not dissimilar

[19] I place the term 'culture' in italics to denote my awareness that in Africa, there exist numerous cultures.

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to that of anthropologists, scientists, colonial explorers and missionaries who said that Africans were "backwards, primitive and in need of salvation from the West." Furthermore, Blay contends that from Walker's "descriptive comparisons of her characters' actions and behaviours to animals, namely monkeys, to her homogenization and miniaturization of Africa into one village" in *Possessing the Secrets of Joy* (Walker 1992) *and Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and Sexual Blinding of Women* (Walker and Parmar 1993) she "seemingly functions with similar cultural arrogance as have generations of Eurocentric scholars, feminists and non-feminists alike, who have positioned themselves as Africa's saviours."

Ogunyemi (1985: 68-69) defines African Womanism as follows, "Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates Black roots, the ideas of black life… Its ideal is for Black unity where every Black person has a modicum of power and so can be a 'brother' or a 'sister' or a 'father' or a 'mother' to the other." African Womanism is an expression of the ambivalence of being located within the network of global feminisms and womanisms that does not emphasise the social and cultural realities of African societies. The gender-question in African Womanism is dealt with in the context of other intersecting issues that are relevant for African women. These issues go beyond Walkers race, class and gender issues (Arndt 2005: 33). Ogunyemi (1985: 64) places the womanist vision within the experiences of African women in Africa, asserting that it is only African women who can lay claim to have created a uniquely African brand of womanism. African Womanism is built on the premise that African woman in Africa need an Afrocentric framework to effectively theorize their specific lived realities (Makombe 2018: 110). In an interview with Arndt (1998: 4) regarding the conceptualization of African Womanism, Ogunyemi asserted that:

> When I was thinking about womanism, I was thinking about those areas that are relevant for Africans but not for Blacks in America – issues like extreme poverty and in-law problems, older women oppressing younger women, women oppressing their co-wives, or men oppressing their wives. Religious fundamentalism is another African problem that is not really relevant to African Americans – Islam, some Christian denominations, and also African traditional religions. These are problems that have to

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> my mind to be covered (sic) an African womanist perspective. So I thought it was necessary to develop a theory to accommodate these differences.

Jell-Bahlsen (1998:101) articulates that African Womanism represents a rethinking and rearticulating of fundamental concepts in that it is not merely focused on women's oppression but on a broad spectrum of oppressions experienced by Africans in Africa. A salient feature of African Womanism is its critique of Western assumptions about the personhood of African women as helpless victims, unable to lift themselves out of oppression. African Womanism challenges European assumptions about women in Africa. It takes into account the impact African cultures have on the lives of women and challenges the status quo of contemporary patriarchies and cultural practices that constrain women at both domestic and public levels. It confronts the structural and systemic oppression of women and brings women's subjugated positions into dialogue based on women's political, economic and cultural oppression (Mangena 2013: 8, Mpofu 2017: 74). Mpofu (2017: 74-75) argues that African Womanism is ideally situated and constructed to advocate for women's emancipation from the perspective of African cultures, thereby challenging the misuse of culture and advocating for balanced power spheres for both men and women. African Womanism inspires an activism of women that facilitates community building and transformation, self-determination and personal and communal empowerment. However, critics of African Womanism argue that African Womanism does not encompass the totality of Black women's experiences. Notwithstanding its claim to being an inclusive approach, Kolawole (2002) posits that African Womanism fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity of women. Women in Africa are diverse, and their differences are not only racial, economic, cultural, political or religious "but all of these together, often at odds with one another and often inclusive of factors such as sexuality and acceptance" (Mpofu 2017: 76).

African Womanism offers important theoretical insights for this study because it allows for a more nuanced evaluation of the structural and systemic factors that lead to survival sex in the

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context of food insecurity. Its capacity to discern and interrogate interlocking subsystems of oppression, marginalization and depravation that lead to the practice of survival sex in a location specific way allows for a closer examination of how hunger and lack is a driver of survival sex in the Msunduzi Municipality. By drawing on African womanist epistemologies, I place at the forefront the experiences and concerns of women represented in this study and highlight multiple layers of oppression experienced by under resourced women in South African cities. Linking the structural factors that inhibit the progress of women to the commodification of women's bodies, I employ African Womanism to explore how institutionalized hegemonic gender configurations in society promote the feminization of poverty and women's vulnerability to survival sex.

3.4. African Women's Theology

African Women's Theology is a form of Liberation Theology.[20] As such, African women theologians seek to make theology relevant for day to day life and to address all forms of oppression that inhibit life, particularly the lives of African women (Tarus 2014: 4). Through doing theology communally and the shared experience of oppression, African Women's Theology values the interconnectedness of life and seeks to offer hope and empowerment to women in order to negotiate survival and agitate for equality (Phiri 1997, Gathogo 2010, Oduyoye 2001b).

Many feminist biblical scholars (Dube 2003, Nadar 2007, Kanyoro 2002, Masenya 1998, 2004, Yeong-Mee 2012) use the text of Ruth to expound on issues of patriarchal injustice against

[20] In August 1988, Mercy Amba Oduyoye brought together a group of African women in the offices of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland to discuss the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Most were academics in the field of religion and culture and belonged to the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). The objective of the Circle was to explore and conceptualize African women's theologies and conduct research. The Circle was officially launched in Ghana in 1989. The Circle's key interest is women in Church and society. The Circle is an African conception concerned with issues that affect African women and all oppressed people in Africa. Theological reflections done by members of the Circle is known as African Women's Theology. As socially engaged theologians, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians seek transformation from all forms of oppression, the full inclusion of women in Church and society and advocates for life giving theologies that challenge oppressive patriarchal practices. See Fiedler (2010).

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women in the Bible and in present day contexts. The text has been used to demonstrate the nature of gendered socio-economic inequalities and its contribution to women's vulnerabilities. Scholars have used the text to explain how religion, culture, politics and socio-economic injustice intersect and thereby disenfranchises women and entrenches poverty, leaving women vulnerable to dangerous and risky survival strategies. They have pointed out that the text is replete with themes relating to the intersecting nature of patriarchal oppression on the lives of women - in particular, how these intersections are the bedrock of women's ideological disenfranchisement.

Singh (2018), explored life giving theological responses to prostitution in the context of evangelical Churches in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia using African Women's Theology as the main theoretical tool. Investigating the manner in which evangelical Churches in Ethiopia understand prostitution, Singh explored the themes: God, sin, humanity, justice and the Church. Responses from participants revealed theological insufficiencies by evangelical Churches in Ethiopia that impede the formation of life affirming theological responses to prostitution. Drawing on African Women's Theology, Nkiruka (2016) contends that the work of African women theologians includes giving theological weight and substance to African women's contextual experiences of suffering and injustice. In their struggle against patriarchal modes of doing theology, African women theologians critique the exclusion and dominance of women by men. Perceiving that culture is often used as a tool of domination, African women theologians centre listening to and giving voice to the specificity of African women's lived experience in light of the Christian faith.

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Phiri (2008/2009: 115), argues that women's experience is a central feature in the analysis of women's oppression as expounded by African women theologians. African women theologians are concerned with religio-cultural, socio-economic and political oppression that dehumanizes and marginalizes women on the African continent. African women theologians focus on reinterpreting the Bible with the specific situations and agendas of African women in Africa in mind. As a theology committed to contextual issues affecting African women such as women's reproductive health, justice, exploitation and poverty, African Women's Theology is praxis

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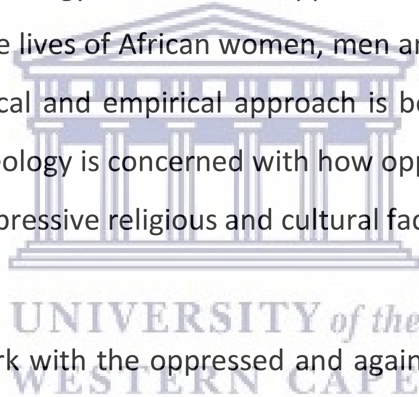
orientated and seeks to develop liberationist theological responses to the structural and systemic forces that present a challenge to African women's holistic, life-affirming living conditions (Oduyoye 2001b: 17). An important characteristic of African Women's Theology is its commitment to theologising about contemporary issues such as poverty, injustice, exploitation and the subordinate positions of women in Church and society. As a communal and praxis orientated mode of theology, African Women's Theology reflects on the shared experiences of oppression from the perspective of the Christian faith with the aim of developing liberative theological responses to the challenges people in Africa are confronted with (Oduyoye 2001c: 16-17). As a theology of relations, African Women's Theology seeks to reform hierarchical and patriarchal ecclesial and societal relations (Landman 1998: 15). Specifically tailored for African contexts, African Women's Theology focuses on oppressive religio-cultural, political and economic systems that affect the lives of African women, men and the ecosystem. Imbued with liberationist tenets, its theological and empirical approach is both contextual and communal. Moreover, African Women's Theology is concerned with how oppression intersects with racism, socio-economic injustice and oppressive religious and cultural factors.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African Women theologians work with the oppressed and against oppressive structures in the fight for human dignity, justice and equality (Phiri and Nadar 2010: 83). Through engaging themes of religion and theology, social justice, equity, inclusion and solidarity across race, class, gender and ethnic lines, African Women's Theology is unquestionably "prophetic in a theological sense and activist in a secular sense" (Phiri and Nadar 2006: 6). African women theologians argue that a theology that is divorced from ethical demands has little relevance for Africa and contend that God's action throughout history is holistic and redemptive. God's salvific, redemptive, liberative and reconciliatory action in the world is concerned with liberating humanity from all forms of sin and oppression (Tarus 2014: 4). Emphasising the centrality of the Bible in the work of liberation, African women theologians use biblical stories to formulate and articulate particular theological standpoints and convey messages of hope, justice, redemption and equality (Dube and Kanyoro 2005, Ackermann 2006: 231). While African women theologians have been criticised for being part of the educated elite speaking on behalf of poor women on the continent from positions of privilege (Maluleke 2001: 248),

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Ayanga (2016: 2) maintains that a key objective of African women theologians is to represent African women at grassroots level.

The central goal of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is academic research, writing and publication (Kanyoro 1997: 11). African Women's Theology seeks to encompass the experiences, voices and concerns of all African women and to "be true to the reality of Africa" by taking seriously issues of representation (Monohan 2004: 9-10). Van Witteloostuijn (2018: 11) notes that this level of representational ethics is critical in scholarship as the crisis of representation or who can or who should speak for whom is a constant debate in academic circles. African Women's Theology uses a range of methods to seek out and valorise the experiences and voices of women from all walks of life (Ruele 2003: 80). Ayanga (2016: 3) affirms that most African women theologians are organic members of the communities within which they apply their theological expertise. The communal and praxis orientated approach to doing African Women's Theology and much of the tenets discussed above finds resonance with CBS. Through the lens of African Women's Theology, theological themes generated during the CBS were addressed from the perspective of women's social, cultural, religious, economic and political oppression as it relates to the practice of survival sex.

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3.6. Conclusion

This chapter described the theoretical tool kit that is the basis for reflection in this study. I have elucidated how the theoretical tool kit facilitates analysis of the insights and motivations that drive the practice of survival sex in the context of food insecurity as understood by Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality. I discussed reader-response theory and how the reading trajectory of participants was explored as they employed the liberationist tenets of CBS to their readings of the text. Reader-response theory served to elucidate the connection between patriarchal biblical interpretation and the domination of women in the context of extreme deprivation and lack. The discussion on African Womanism demonstrated its appropriateness as a theoretical approach in exploring the lived contextual realities of women who consider survival sex as a conceivable option in the mitigation of food insecurity. I explicated how African

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Womanism assisted in understanding historic and institutionalized hegemonic power imbalances that result in women's socio-economic, socio-religious, socio-cultural and political domination and disenfranchisement. African Women's Theology was used to inform the dialogue on issues of sin and survival, redemption, justice and hope as it relates to survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

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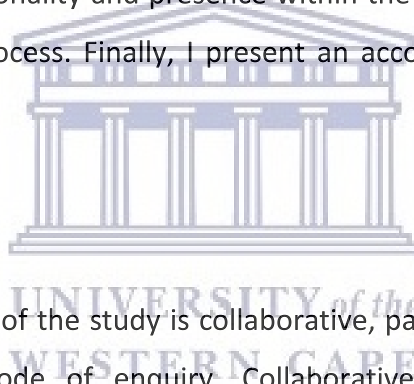
Chapter Four

Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the first part of the methodological approaches employed in this study. In the next chapter, I focus exclusively on the CBS method. Here I provide an account of the methodological underpinnings that govern this study. I begin with a brief presentation of the research design followed by my justification for adopting a qualitative, exploratory, empirical approach. Foregrounding my use of reflexivity in the study, I describe the contours of reflexivity and my own position as the researcher. I also demonstrate the importance of being attentive to and conscious of my own positionality and presence within the research process as well as my limitations within the entire process. Finally, I present an account of the data collection and data analysis procedure.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4.2. Research Design

The methodological orientation of the study is collaborative, participatory and empowering, in alignment with a feminist mode of enquiry. Collaborative research foregrounds group participation where particular social concerns are described and evaluated together. In participatory research, participants play an active role in the generation of knowledge. Empowering inquiries prioritize research that is a service to the participants. Through this level of collaborative and participatory research, participants gain knowledge to understand and deal with a particular social concern more proficiently (Boontinand 2005: 182-184). This orientation finds resonance with the study's data collection instrument. CBS will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Here I wish only to briefly comment on its relevance. As mentioned earlier, during the conceptualization phase of this study, I surmised that employing CBS as a data gathering instrument would produce additional insight regarding survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. As a religious resource, CBS is generally conducted with organized groups of people from faith communities, mainly Christianity (The Ujamaa Centre 2014: 26). In this study I employed qualitative, exploratory and empirical

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research approaches in the investigation. I employed reflexivity in order to foreground my own positionality within the study.

4.3. Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is the study of people and systems through interaction and observation in their natural settings. It has the capacity to glean how people understand their own situations in ways that are not harmful or intrusive (Cohen et al 2007: 167). Harding and Norberg (2005) hold that qualitative methods are preferred over quantitative methods in feminist research because qualitative methods make room for an in-depth representation of women's lived experiences. Moreover, qualitative methods are most suited for feminist research because it has the capacity to reveal experiences of women in contemporary society (Depner 1981). Qualitative research methods aid feminist researchers in their commitment to "realizing as fully as possible women's voices in data gathering" and preparing an account that transmits those voices (Olesen 1994: 167). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) note that qualitative research is an appropriate tool of enquiry to seek answers to "questions that stress how social experience is created." Qualitative research methods are ideally suited for the gathering and analysis of data in many forms and aims to achieve understanding on the subject of enquiry. According to Snape and Spencer (2003: 8), qualitative research methods has the potential to discover, ascertain, construct and define phenomena experienced by people in specific contexts. In this study, I employed words and concepts to generate data which was useful for the discovery, description and analysis of characteristics, themes and underlying dimensions regarding survival sex in the context of food insecurity (Blaikie 2010: 70). Through CBS, participants provided in-depth perceptions, thoughts, knowledge, observations and experiences (Mills and Birks 2014) that made for a rich data gathering process as they engaged collaboratively in an exploratory investigation of religious, cultural, social, economic and political factors that drive the practice of survival sex in their context.

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4.4. Exploratory Research

Exploratory research begins with a formulated supposition, asking how much that supposition

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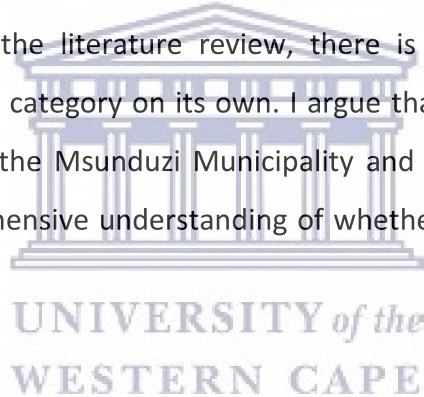
can explain and how well it can explain it (Reiter 2017: 144). According to Brink et al (2012: 175), the primary goal of exploratory research is to gain a better understanding of an issue or situation. Exploratory research allows for the description of a phenomenon and factors that influence and interact with it (Stebbins 2001). Drawing on Blaikie (2010: 70), I use exploratory research to account for "patterns in observed social phenomena…, social relationships, social processes and social structures." Schutt (2006: 14) opines that exploratory research is an investigation of social phenomena without explicit presuppositions. Exploratory research attempts to understand how people respond to situations, how they explain their concerns or "what is going on here?" At the outset of this study, I posited that CBS has the capacity to contribute additional insight in the investigation of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Given that survival sex is often subsumed under the literature on transactional sex over the past two decades, as discussed in the literature review, there is a need for a more nuanced examination of survival sex as a category on its own. I argue that there is a need for a deeper investigation of survival sex in the Msunduzi Municipality and that through the garnering of empirical data, a more comprehensive understanding of whether food insecurity is a driver of survival sex could be achieved.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4.5. Empirical Research

Empirical data, according to Reiter (2017: 144), is used to refine a postulation to the point that it makes more sense and can be explained in a more plausible and consistent way. Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007: 12) assert that empirical feminist research has the capacity to expose "previously unknown and/or repressed experiences of women and disrupt traditional, essentialist beliefs" relating to women, to "remedy shortcomings and omissions" and improve objectivity relating to lived experiences of women. Through an empirical research approach, the collaboration with Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality added significant insight to the current discourse on the practice of survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

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4.6. Reflexivity

Reflexivity or the ability to locate oneself within a situation is an important aspect of research. It takes into account the influence of personal interpretation, positioning and action within a specific context (Fook 1999 118). According to Patton (2002: 7) and Major (2018), reflexivity requires the researcher to be attentive to and conscious of the ideological, cultural, social, political and linguistic origins of their own standpoint and perspectives as well as the standpoints and perspectives of their research participants. Reflexivity challenges the researcher to articulate and evaluate biases, preconceptions, attitudes and actions with the purpose of transforming behaviour and identifying limitations the researcher may embody. Major further posits that reflexivity is essential in qualitative research because "a researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached, from the knowledge and evidence they are generating." It is therefore important for the researcher to understand her role in the research process. Patton (2002:7) went on to say that "asking oneself difficult questions in the research process is part of the activity of reflexivity." Reflexivity requires that the researcher constantly evaluate her own presence in the research process. According to Mason (2002:8), reflexivity ensures that the researcher's influence in the research process is accounted for. Adopting reflexivity served to highlight that I am an essential component of the research process.

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4.7. Positionality

The researcher's positionality profoundly influences all aspects of how qualitative research is conducted within social science (Fremlova 2018: 100). Moreover, declaring one's positionality is a significant feature in feminist research (Ali 2014: 1-18, Peake 2017: 5). Positionality emphasizes the researcher's perspective of the world based on her specific worldview and life experiences. It also serves to highlight that the identity of the researcher influences the research process and has a profound effect on how the research is conducted. According to Fremlova (2018: 101):

> Positionality refers to a researcher's discursive situatedness in the social world in relation to power relations that are often asymmetrical and exist in inequitable ways. It

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is “relational, unstable, not fixed and contextually situated” … determined by where the researcher stands in relation to power; this can shift over time and/or in the course of conducting research ... Positionality reflects the ontological and epistemological values and worldviews into which the researcher – the main orchestrator of collecting, collating, analysing, and interpreting data – is discursively embedded… and enmeshed. It is complemented by a gamut of variable, intersectional, and interlocking factors, such as the researcher’s identities, including ethnicity/race, gender/gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic status and/or class, educational background, dis/ability, political views, religious beliefs…

As a Black woman shaped by experiences of oppression as a result of race, class and gender, I identify with the experiences and struggles of my research participants and the communities they represent. Our collective experience of being women of faith, living in a highly racialized and patriarchal society and our shared experience of food insecurity and lack united us and had a direct impact on my choice of research topic, research participants and my commitment and levels of engagement within the research. In this study, I positioned myself as both researcher/facilitator and research participant. Sundén and Sveningsson (2012: 12-13) argue that the researcher’s closeness, participation and involvement in the research develops close bonds with research participants and does not hinder critical analysis. Moreover, it enables the researcher and research participants to become co-producers of knowledge. Notwithstanding the obvious questions of power and ethics in research, and the researcher being understood as holding a more powerful position in the research than the research participants, as researcher, I was constantly mindful of my own position and the danger of misusing the inherent power as researcher/facilitator (Sundén and Sveningsson 2012: 120). Moreover, I endeavoured to minimize the power dynamic between us as much as possible by building relationships with the research participants and creating a sense of ‘camaraderie’ amongst us.

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4.7.1. My Positionality

When I was around five or six years old, I played with my friends and cousins every day in a field that separated the tiny old abandoned Church building that was our home from a White owned farm in the agricultural community in which I lived. My friends, all African, Indian and Coloured, as per apartheid's racial classification system,[21] played happily together with our makeshift toys. On one particular sunny Saturday morning we heard the sound of music wafting from the direction of the farm. We loved to sing and dance and we loved music. The sound of music was a luxury, its only source was my grandmother's old radio, powered by a PM9 battery when she could afford to buy one. My grandmother used to listen to her series and the news. On rare occasions, when my parents and aunts and uncles were home on the weekend, they used the radio to play music. So, when we heard the popular tunes we loved so much, we found ourselves following the sound of the music to the edge of the farm where a group of White teenagers were dancing to the tune of the beat. Edging closer and closer, dancing as we went, we found ourselves at the fence of the farm, dancing and singing along.

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Suddenly, they spotted us. "Sies!!! [indicating revulsion], they make me sick" said one of the teenage girls with a disgusted look on her face. The entire group began yelling obscenities at us. The teenage boys began crossing the fence while unbuckling their belts, yelling, "voetsek kaffirs." We ran for our lives, fearing a terrible assault but one of my friends, Busan, paralyzed by fear just stood there until the lash from a belt came down on him. I remember my older cousin running back to grab Busan and run to safety and also received a belting. They chased us

[21] The Population Registration Act (Act no 30 of 1950) was the cornerstone of apartheid because it divided South Africans into racial categories legislatively. Originally, three basic race groups were identified, namely, Whites, Natives and Coloureds. Indians were initially classified as Coloured but a fourth group was later added. Under the amended Act, Coloureds and Indians were classified into various subgroups, including Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Other Indian and Other Coloured. Racial classification made apartheid's separate development possible. The main reason for this separate development was the maintenance of White superiority and privilege in all aspects of life. The apartheid government used the Population Registration Act and a host of other racial laws to prevent the White population from mixing with other race groups, thus preserving the supposed 'purity' of the White race in South Africa and cementing their privilege. Admixing and associations amongst racial groups other than White was frowned upon but the prohibition was not strictly enforced. The prohibition was rigorously and brutally enforced between the White race group and other races in South Africa. See South African History Online and Posel (2001).

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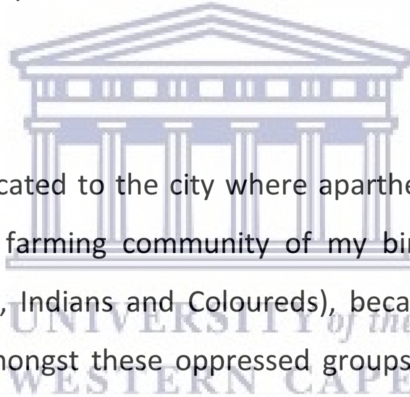
into the yard but turned around and left when my grandmother came to the door. My grandmother, with both hands on her head instructed the other children to go home. Then she instructed each of her grandchildren to cut and skin a *proper* stick from the peach tree. As she beat each of us with our own sticks she yelled, "Do you want to die? How many times must I tell you not to go near the farm? If they killed you what would I tell your parents?" She looked more petrified than we were. Stinging from the strikes of the peach tree stick and the terror we experienced, I felt like we were the most insignificant, dirty and undesirable creatures on earth. I wondered why she said nothing to the White teenagers. I wondered why they did not get into trouble for attacking us. I wondered why it was our fault that they attacked us. I realized then that they could indeed kill us without facing any consequences. Most of all I realized that my grandmother who nurtured and protected us with her own life was powerless to protect us from White people.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As time went by my family relocated to the city where apartheid's Group Areas Act[22] was far more pronounced than in the farming community of my birth. Here the separation even between Black people (Africans, Indians and Coloureds), became more pronounced and the prejudices that existed even amongst these oppressed groups became more apparent.[23] My memories of racism and prejudice are many – I remember them because of the profound impact they had on me and as a result, I have always been aware of the distinct separation between White and Black in our highly racialized society. These experiences shape who I am and are critical aspects that determine and influence my positionality. It is also these

[22] The Group Areas Act was passed in 1950. It was the legal framework the apartheid government used to establish particular neighbourhoods for particular race groups. Under the Policy of Apartheid, the Group Areas Act allocated different residential and business areas to different race groups in South Africa. The majority of the Black populace were forcibly relegated to what the apartheid government termed Bantustans, homelands or townships. This was in order to prevent Black South Africans from living in urban areas in South Africa. One of the key purposes of the Group Areas Act was to set up independent governments for Black South Africans, thus removing any rights they could have as citizens in the country and making them accountable for their own separate administrations. Under apartheid, Blacks who constituted 75% of the population were allocated only 13% of the land while the minority white population were allocated the remaining 87%. The separation of the Black population groups into African, Indian and Coloured facilitated a further division each with their own townships and with different status levels accorded to each of the Black groups. See *The Group Areas Act of 1950* and Obeng-Odoom (2012).

[23] Even though we were all oppressed under apartheid, we were not equally oppressed. The Indian population was far more advantaged than the Coloured population and the Coloured population more advantaged than the African population. See Dala (2018).

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experiences that are the driving force behind my desire to conduct research with the women I resonate most with.

Ethnically, I am a South African Indian. My father's heritage is both Cape Malay and Coloured and my mother's ancestors are indentured labourers arriving in South Africa around the 1860s to work the sugar cane plantations in Natal under colonial rule. I identify ethnically as a South African Indian because the apartheid government classified me as such and because from the age of eight, I lived in an Indian Dormitory Township in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal where I adapted and adopted much of the South African Indian customs and traditions. I must also state at this point that my brother and sister with whom I share biological parents were classified Coloured and Cape Malay respectively - so tenuous was the racial classification system of South Africa's policy of apartheid. Racially, I identify as Black. Throughout this study I use the term "Black" to refer to all people marginalized, oppressed and excluded by South Africa's racial classification system under the policy of apartheid, the effects of which are still largely evident today, more than two decades after its disbandment.

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My own lived experiences and that of the research participants inevitably impacted and shaped the direction of this research. I agree with Pitard (2017: 1), who observes that social location and experience inexorably shapes the way we see the world and impacts the type of questions we ask and consider. It also influences what evokes sympathy and understanding in us as well as what causes us to feel uncomfortable and avoid or skirt around certain issues. I found that sharing my life experiences paved the way for the research participants to be open and honest about theirs. This also validated to participants that the spaces within CBS were safe and encouraged open and honest dialogue. Moreover, sharing my own personal journey of being food insecure and the dangers it posed, encouraged participants to share their experiences, perceptions and insights. The process of continuously examining my own presence and positionality within the research made for rich, open and informative CBS sessions.

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Being continuously mindful of my own presence within the research and that my presence significantly directed the research process, I was particularly attentive to the issues that are uncomfortable to address for myself and the research participants. In my own introspection, I realize that that which makes me uncomfortable is often issues related to my faith and my value system - issues that bring those into question. As I pondered my own positionality within the research, I concluded that in order to overcome these levels of discomfort, I needed to be honest and upfront about my own experiences and vulnerabilities and share with the research participants how those experiences and vulnerabilities influenced my choice of research topic, gatekeeper and research participants.

4.8. Gatekeeper:[24] The Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA)

PACSA was established as an ecumenical Faith Based Organization (FBO) in 1979 under the name, Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness. As a Christian organization, the initial task of PACSA was the conscientization of White Christians in South Africa about the evils of apartheid and the impact of its oppression on the majority of the South African population (Coan 2013). Working within a social justice paradigm, PACSA used a carefully crafted communications strategy to bring awareness to White South Africans of the anti-Christian actions inherent in the brutal policy of apartheid. According to Manda (2014: 263), to a large extent, White Christians were seemingly unaware of the evils inflicted on Black South Africans because the apartheid regime hid much of its horrors from the general public. Through the use of photographs, slideshows and stories gathered from people brutalized by apartheid police and who sought help from PACSA, the appalling conditions of segregated living, marginalization and oppression in South Africa were captured and disseminated locally, nationally and internationally. PACSA also published 'fact sheets' on a regular basis that highlighted the extreme disparities between Black and White in South Africa and the huge divide between privilege and oppression. Many defenders of the system declared that the atrocities of

[24] A gatekeeper is an individual or organization that acts as an intermediary between a researcher and potential research participants.

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apartheid were being exaggerated but through the efforts of PACSA, much of the suffering experienced by Black South Africans became undeniable and many White South Africans began to acknowledge that apartheid was a racist and inhumane system of oppression (Coan 2013).

PACSA was a significant force in the struggle against apartheid in Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands in the 1980s and early 1990s. In the context of the harrowing period of apartheid, the formation of PACSA is deemed by many as a courageous act of resistance. South Africa under apartheid was a police state in which the apartheid government employed lawlessness as a means of political control. Because of its resistance to police brutality and its "Defiance Campaigns" against the policy of apartheid, PACSA was regarded as a renegade organization by the apartheid government. PACSA was a haven for those persecuted by the State and police raids on PACSA premises were a regular occurrence. PACSA also carefully documented events, with minutes of meetings, photographs and other important evidentiary artefacts. PACSA was therefore a place where information about human rights violations and the horrors of apartheid were collected and stored. This collection was later, under the democratic dispensation, donated to the Alan Paton Archival Centre located at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Coan 2013).

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Staff at PACSA were constantly harassed by apartheid police and often arrested for holding illegal gatherings, being in possession of confidential documents and banned books. Having in its possession key information about political conflicts, deaths in detention, malnutrition, income disparities and widespread poverty of Black people in the country as a direct result of the policy of apartheid, PACSA became a formidable force in the fight against the oppressive regime. Another aspect of PACSA's work in the early days was the monitoring of the increasing levels of State sponsored violence and providing moral, material and medical support for political detainees, their families and anyone abused by the apartheid system. PACSA's founder, Peter Kerchhoff was detained for 97 days in 1986 and in 1992 PACSA's community worker, Sikhumbuzo Mbatha was gunned down after a PACSA meeting. PACSA's work in its formative years can be described as heroic and revolutionary (Coan 2013).

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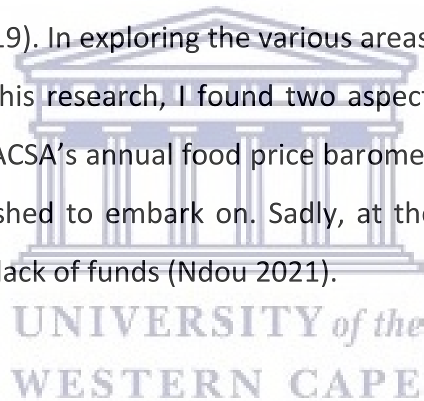
Over time, with the eradication of apartheid and working within a new social justice paradigm, PACSA's mandate changed to serving marginalized communities still grappling with the legacies of apartheid's oppression. Guided by what it called a 'theology of accompaniment', PACSA privileged a preferential option for the poor,[25] by working towards community development and transformation. Through its core strategy of process facilitation,[26] PACSA partnered with local communities in efforts to build citizenship and restore human dignity. Through Process Facilitation, PACSA aimed to build agency, self-sufficiency and resilience in impoverished and marginalized communities. Moreover, PACSA sought to empower communities and individuals affected by injustice by offering expertise and training in several areas of community-based development (Skosana 2013: 3-19). In exploring the various areas of PACSA's social engagement at the onset of embarking on this research, I found two aspects of PACSA's work, the urban community food gardens and PACSA's annual food price barometer particularly interesting and relevant for the PhD work I wished to embark on. Sadly, at the time of finalizing this thesis, PACSA closed its doors due to a lack of funds (Ndou 2021).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4.8.1. PACSA's Food Price Barometer

The PACSA Food Price Barometer tracked the monthly price of foods purchased by low income households in the Msunduzi Municipality. It was specifically designed to measure food price

[25] A preferential option for the poor is built on the premise that poverty and inhumanity is contrary to the will of God. The Christian faithful are obliged to pursue social justice and provide help and support to the poor. The concept is embraced in particular by Liberation Theology. See Gutierrez (1987: 94).

[26] PACSA's Process Facilitation was a process of partnership and collaboration with community based small organizations who work with issues of social justice and human rights. In partnering with these small organizations PACSA worked alongside them, helping them to achieve their goals until they attained independence and could operate as entities on their own. Process facilitation involved PACSA's community-based partners voicing their needs, plans and interests. PACSA then came alongside them, offering financial and capacity building support until they were able to operate in self-sufficient ways. The process allowed for spaces to be created for the development of strategies, identifying of development goals and taking appropriate measures towards achieving such goals. PACSA worked in partnership with these groups and helped them identify and secure specialist services and support in their endeavour to create a better life for themselves and their families. Beginning from the premise that the most powerful tool a person has is the individual themselves, PACSA strove to identify and inculcate a sense of agency amongst the individuals it partnered with in the process facilitation journey and sought primarily to draw on the people's knowledge, experience, skills and expertise. See PACSA Archives.

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inflation as experienced by households living on low incomes. According to Abrahams (2017), food prices, food expenditure and the rand value as related to food purchase in Msunduzi is indicative of the deep crisis around incomes, wages and the South African economy.

Abrahams (2017) found that there are significantly more Black households than there are workers employed in the Msunduzi Municipality. Most of these households rely on just one wage earner with many people to support. Households are the net buyers of food with supermarkets being the main source of supply. In a cash-based economy such as South Africa access to food requires money. Due to the extreme shortage in cash flow for low income households in the Msunduzi Municipality, they are largely unable to access sufficient nutritious food. The problem with lack of access to food is not availability since South Africa is a food secure nation which produces its own food. Food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality is directly related to the country's economic and political landscape. PACSA's research indicates that the median wage for low income Black South African households is below the household poverty line and poverty levels in the country are on the rise. With no safeguards, women are forced to resort to invidious measures to put food on the table. Because the struggle to secure goods and essential services takes precedence, women prioritize these expenses and purchase food with the remaining money, often not enough to feed the entire family for the entire month. This means that the food budget is extremely low and households underspend on monthly food. As a result, food runs out long before the month ends. "Women absorb these shortfalls in their bodies…" asserts Abrahams (2017).

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4.8.2. PACSA's Involvement in Urban Community Food Gardens

PACSA partnered with small organizations operating as one group known as The Food Justice Collective in order to gain access to penurious communities. The Food Justice Collective comprised of almost 100% women between the ages of 20 and 80 years old, residing in and around the Msunduzi Municipality. This partnership formed part of PACSA's Sustainable Livelihoods Program. All group members were actively involved in urban community food gardens or other types of farming such as livestock rearing and other projects. Because of its

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relevance for my own research, I will focus solely on the urban community food gardens project.

Members of the urban community food gardens followed firm principles of unity, solidarity and supporting each other. The gardeners received support from PACSA vis-à-vis organizational expenditures, planning and preparation in order to plough the allocated patch of vacant land, plant the crops and reap the harvests. When the harvest was ready the gardeners shared the bounty amongst themselves. Among the crops planted, cared for and harvested were potatoes, maize and beans. All the participants in the project shared their indigenous knowledge of planting with each other. They also receive expertise and support from PACSA in this regard, thereby enhancing their skill depth. Participants took what they needed for personal consumption and sold the remaining crop at local markets or to street vendors. Through PACSA's support, participants in the urban food gardens project were able to supplement their incomes and mitigate food insecurity on a long-term basis. In addition, the gardeners supported each other in the development of other small businesses such as tuck-shops, cake sales and small-scale catering. The community food gardens represented not only a site of livelihood generation but also a site for support, solidarity and mobilization. As a group, the urban food gardeners played a pivotal role in their communities, offering guidance, support and encouragement to other women in order to become empowered by joining the project or receiving counsel from individuals within the group.

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4.8.3. Propitious Encounter

My affiliation with PACSA began in 2007 when as a student worker at the Gender Desk of the Ujamaa Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal, I assisted with conducting a series of contextual Bible studies on gender related issues. Between 2007 and 2010 I attended numerous seminars and training workshops hosted by PACSA. There I met several groups of women in particular who were receiving training or support from PACSA. I was always inspired by the various stories' women told of their suffering and of how PACSA's partnering with them led to individual and community transformation and empowerment. My awareness of the social

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justice work undertaken by PACSA is what prompted me to read more about the current work PACSA was engaged in. Because of my interest in food insecurity, I was impressed by PACSA's work towards the eradication of hunger in various communities in the Msunduzi Municipality.

PACSA's recognition that food insecurity is one of the key areas of vulnerability for under resourced women living on the margins of society in the Msunduzi Municipality is one of the reasons why I approached them to act as gatekeeper for my PhD research. Moreover, because of my past affiliation with PACSA, I was aware of their social justice work and that they used CBS as a conscientization and pedagogical tool in their work. This meant that they were familiar with the merits of CBS. When I approached PACSA in 2017 to act as gatekeeper for my fieldwork research, I was met with some hesitancy. The reason for this was that PACSA was experiencing some trying times with a skeleton staff having to handle massive workloads and the thought of having to deal with another project was particularly daunting. However, after sharing with Mr Mervyn Abrahams, the Director of PACSA, a brief overview of the work I wished to embark on, he felt that it might be beneficial to PACSA to act as my gatekeeper. After a series of meetings with the Director and a Process Facilitator, Mr Michael Malinga, the request was granted since it was ascertained that the interaction would be to a large extent, mutually beneficial.

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Mr Malinga was assigned to oversee my project because he worked with the urban food gardens project. A precondition was that I familiarize myself with the group of women I was to work with. This was ideal for me because I believe that CBS is most productive when a relationship of trust is developed between the researcher and the research participants. In addition, while my thesis proposal was accepted by the end of 2017, it took a few more months for ethical clearance to be granted. I used this in between time in 2018 to build relationships and engender a spirit of camaraderie with the group of women I was to work with.

I joined the group on several occasions when they met at PACSA for their weekly support group meeting and also joined them on several occasions to work on the urban community food

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gardens which they tended. The women were deeply connected to their communities and as a group, made efforts to involve other women in their communities in income generating and personal empowerment projects. Because of their locatedness, their indelible links to the communities to which they belong and the work they did within their communities, they had a clear understanding of community concerns, patterns of behaviour, traits and idiosyncrasies that are not apparent to people outside of these communities. They were therefore well placed to engage the topic of survival sex in the context of food insecurity as it relates to their particular communities.

PACSA's suggestion that I spend some time with the group of women who were to become the research participants for this project was extremely beneficial and advantageous to me. As a researcher interested in the lived realities of women on the margins of society, their interests, concerns, struggles, challenges and triumphs, I was keen to observe the inner workings of the group. Moreover, based on my discussions with the Director and Process Facilitator at PACSA, I was eager to observe, first-hand, their commitment to dealing with issues of food insecurity in their communities and their understanding of the inner workings of their communities. I also wished to establish a rapport with the women with whom I was to engage for my fieldwork research because they represented an important link to community knowledge that I would otherwise not have access to.

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4.8.4. Selection Criteria for Research Participants

Researching survival sex in the context of food insecurity is a sensitive issue with many underlying factors to consider. Guri and Brunovskis (2005: 18) note that researching women engaged in sex work is challenging because people engaged in it often belong to a hidden population. Moreover, the extent of the practice is often unknown and there often exists no sampling frame. In order to conduct research with such clandestine populations, the researcher must necessarily envisage creative ways of sampling by using different approaches to those commonly used when researching more observable populations. One such approach is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling employs a wide range of techniques and requires

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imaginative efforts to gain access to populations that are difficult to locate. This often requires collaboration with experts in the selection process (Singh 2018: 72-73).

When I approached PACSA in 2017 with my research aspirations, to explore Christian women's understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality, I was already aware of PACSA's work with dedicated Christian women who are deeply embedded in their local communities. Because of my own locatedness in under resourced communities, I am aware of the wealth of knowledge that women, particularly those who hold leadership or senior roles in the community, possess. My gatekeeper also agreed that because of the leadership roles the women affiliated with PACSA hold in their communities, they would have access to information relevant for my PhD work. During the months of February and March of 2018 I joined support group meetings attended by various groups affiliated with PACSA. At the first meeting I was asked to share with a large group what my research was all about and who amongst the women of the large group would be interested in being the research participants. The women in the group were all interested in my research and wanted to become research participants. However, the group was quite large with around fifty members. Also, not all the women in the large group had such indelible links with their local communities. The Process Facilitator selected ten women who work as one group on an urban community food garden on the outskirts of the city. The selection was made based on their networking within their own communities, their commitment to the Christian faith, the leadership roles they held in their communities and the community knowledge they held. The Process Facilitator, having worked with the women for a number of years, was well placed to make the selection.

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Each of the women belonged to a different township or informal settlement in the Msunduzi Municipality. Their common goal, as expressed by each of them, was personal and community development and empowerment. Each of the women worked with women in their communities, helping them to access much needed resources and services where possible. As such, they were extremely knowledgeable about issues plaguing their communities. The Process Facilitator at PACSA was excited about the project remarking that CBS sessions would

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not only be a way for me to gather data for my PhD work but also serve to empower[27] these women who would in turn empower women in their own communities. Of the ten women selected to be the research participants, nine attended all the CBS sessions. One of the women, due to issues beyond her control, was unable to attend. According to Patton (2002: 244-245), there are no rules for sample size in qualitative research. What is important is that the sample size supports the overall purpose of the research project. I believe that based on the main aim of the research, to explore Christian women's understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity as it exists in their particular communities, a sample of nine research participants was adequate. Patton (2002: 45) goes on to say that the validity, relevance and insights generated through qualitative research has more to do with the richness of information gathered and of the observational and analytical skills of the researcher than with the size of the sample.

4.8.5. The Research Participants

Prior to embarking on the actual CBS session, between April and August of 2018, I accompanied the nine participants to their urban food gardens on the outskirts of the city of Pietermaritzburg. The women were between the ages of 28 and 60, representing eight communities in the Msunduzi Municipality. During our time together prior to conducting the CBS, I witnessed first-hand how the research participants navigate, struggle, and demonstrate agency through resistance and solidarity. As we tilled the soil, sang and prayed together, I got to learn of their deep commitment to each other and their communities. They spoke of the many struggles they overcame and the ones they're dealing with at present. Each week, one of the women in the group would prepare a humble meal which we shared. This meal was financed by PACSA and was an additional income generating strategy for the women as they received compensation for the preparation of the meal. On the occasions that I accompanied the women to the urban food gardens, I provided soft drinks as a gesture of appreciation and

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[27] I am aware that the word 'empowerment' in the discourses on women and Black people is a contested term (Nazneen et al 2014). I use 'empower' to denote increasing the spiritual, political, social, cultural and economic strength of individuals and communities. Empowerment should necessarily lead to participants' ability to make strategic life choices where the ability was previously denied or inhibited in some way. As such, it should lead to the development of confidence in own capacities. See Breen (2009: 5).

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gratitude.

Witnessing their caring and sharing and the levels of solidarity amongst them was a remarkable experience. Each of the women spearhead community-centred support groups to address particular needs and concerns. I learned of the many projects they were engaged in, of their hopes and aspirations for their communities and their individual families. They spoke of their concern for the well-being of their children and the well-being of the children in their communities who because of poverty and despair have succumbed to drug addiction and other harmful practices. They spoke of their gratitude towards PACSA for helping them lift themselves out of poverty. They also spoke of their concern for those within their communities that are not able to receive such assistance. The general message they communicated was that the support communities received was not adequate to help everyone and that many in their communities suffer under the weight of poverty and lack.

As we tilled the soil, we spoke of our faith. The women belonged to different Christian denominations, yet they seemed deeply in tune with each other and their faith. They spoke of how prayer is an important aspect of their daily lives and of the many women in their communities who are on their prayer lists. They spoke of the lack of social development programmes within their Churches and of how they do not expect material help from their Churches but believe it is their obligation to financially support their Churches. As we shared our stories and insights, a spirit of 'camaraderie' and trust developed amongst us before we even embarked on the CBS programme together.

4.8.6. Deductive Disclosure

Researchers have a responsibility to protect the privacy of research participants. This involves safeguarding personal and sensitive information participants would not want disclosed. The safeguarding of such information entails anonymizing information by stripping all identifiers (Ryerson University 2015: 3). Kaiser (2009: 1632) notes the following:

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> Given that qualitative studies often contain rich descriptions of study participants, confidentiality breaches via deductive disclosure are of particular concern to qualitative researchers. As such, qualitative researchers face a conflict between conveying detailed, accurate accounts of the social world and protecting the identities of the individuals who participated in their research.

Kaiser goes on to say that researchers must be cognizant that "unique combinations of traits can be used to identify" participants. In this study, silence was a common strategy used by communities. Silence served to minimize the embarrassment and harm associated with the practice of survival sex for the individuals involved, the larger family and community. This was saliently communicated during the CBS when a participant questioned the use of pseudonyms.

Upon providing a detailed description of how I intend to capture appropriately during the transcription process the participant expressly requested not to use pseudonyms in my thesis. She substantiated that even pseudonyms may be risky because people may *guess* who said something or link pseudonyms to particular communities and individuals. *To use any name, even if it is a pseudonym, can be a problem*, the participant expressed. It is for this reason that I indicate different participants through letters of the alphabet in chronological order for each conversation set where necessary. This also reinforced the deep stigma associated with survival sex. In my ethical commitment as a researcher I constantly reaffirmed to the research participants that the CBS space is a safe space where each contribution is confidential, valued and respected.

4.9. Research Ethics

The fundamental principle of research ethics, irrespective of methodological choice, is to 'do no harm.' Adopting the highest ethical standards is therefore extremely important when conducting research regarding vulnerable populations. Bird and Scholes (2011: 81) note that:

> As researchers… we gather, analyse, organize, interpret, translate, re-present and

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> communicate information... In the process we inevitably involve ourselves in several overlapping conversations… These conversations require our ongoing attention to ensure ethical integrity in both our treatment of those we study and in our efforts to produce and disseminate knowledge...

It is of vital importance therefore, that the researcher exemplifies ethical awareness throughout the research process. For research to be conducted ethically, the researcher must be continuously mindful of who she is representing. In this study, I was mindful that I was representing women who are not always well represented in written sources and official accounts, especially in the context of religious research. I therefore took seriously how the research participants and the women I represented understood and interpreted their beliefs, biblical texts, rituals and behaviours. To that end, I made a concerted effort to demonstrate respect and appreciation and uphold the dignity and integrity of the research participants and all other conversation partners in the research process.

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I communicated honestly and as objectively as possible throughout the entire process that I worked with the highest level of integrity and responsibility in the gathering, analysis, evaluation and writing processes of this thesis (Bird and Scholes 2011: 81-84). Conducting research using CBS as a data gathering instrument can sometimes be messy and unpredictable. It requires spontaneity and flexibility during the fieldwork process. Continuous reflection on research ethics in order to make ethical and respectful decisions during the fieldwork process and throughout the research was of utmost importance. This required addressing issues of social boundaries and acknowledging those boundaries as I engaged with the research participants. It also involved employing research tools such as reflexivity and representational ethics in the research process.

Edwards and Mauthner (2002: 14-17) contend that reflexivity in research represents an account of ethical engagement and necessitates that the researcher as a key figure in the research process, ensures continuous engagement with ethical research practice. Hinterberger (2007:

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74-81) notes that feminist researchers are often implicated in the process of speaking for and representing others. Moreover, she indicates that this practice of representation is directly tied to the production of knowledge and power. Representation therefore has both political and ethical implications. In light of this, feminist researchers must continue to seek out and strive for ethical representational strategies that seeks to account for the power and authority they hold within the research. While the feminist project of transforming power relations and working towards improving the material conditions of women is often complicated by the representation of the subjectivities and identities of research participants, feminist researchers must work towards an ethical involvement with the women they represent. In this study, it was important to conduct my research in an ethical and accountable way that inspired positive social change, especially for women (Mcwatts 2018: 128). This meant making a concerted effort to invite the voices of my research participants to shape and reshape my understanding and thinking through our collaboration in this research.

4.9.1. Ethical Considerations

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Formal ethical clearance is an important prerequisite for academic research. When seeking ethical clearance, I as the researcher had to consider and think through the potential effects my research could have on the research participants. Mcwatts (2018: 150) maintains that veracity and accountability are inherent traits in feminist research and good ethical practice is central to feminist research. Conducting research of a sensitive nature requires a researcher to make a concerted effort to adhere to good ethical practice throughout the research process from the planning to the implementation stages of the research. This includes the use of standard ethical protocols. I began by familiarizing myself with the University of the Western Cape's Ethics Policy.[28]The Policy is designed to ensure ethical veracity and compliance of all research done through the University of the Western Cape. The Research Ethics Committee ensures that all researchers affiliated with the University comply with the ethical guidelines stipulated. This prompted me to question my own ethical conduct throughout the research process in order to ensure ethical compliance.

[28] See University of the Western Cape Policy of Research Ethics https://www.uwc.ac.za>UWC.

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I maintained compliance regarding a number of ethical issues, ensuring that global and local standardized ethical procedures were upheld. I obtained written permission from my gatekeeper which demonstrated the open and transparent manner in which I sought access to PACSA for research purposes.[29] This was submitted to the Ethics Committee along with an information sheet[30] and a consent form.[31] The gatekeeper's Letter stated that the research was scheduled to take place between March and June of 2018. However, because of the very stringent processes involved, ethical clearance for the research was only granted in August of 2018. I kept my gatekeeper informed of the progress of my ethical clearance application on a regular basis. With permission from my gatekeeper and research participants, fieldwork research began on the 30th of October 2018.

The information sheet outlined clearly the CBS to be conducted as well as that the research is part of my PhD work. The information sheet spells out that there would be no remuneration for taking part in the research, but that transportation cost would be covered and meals provided. Participants were also informed that they were not required to share any personal information during the research and that a trained therapist would be available should participants feel triggered or uncomfortable about sensitive issues during the CBS. Participants were advised that participation in the research was of their own volition and that they had to read and sign a consent form. Each participant was given an information sheet of their own and the entire information sheet was read out aloud to participants at the beginning of the first session of the CBS. After reading the information sheet participants were asked to express any concerns or questions regarding the research.

The methodology and ethics of my research was approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee. As a researcher, I took care to ensure the research participants' physical, emotional and informational risks were

[29] See Appendix A
[30] See Appendix B
[31] See Appendix C

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minimized. This included maintaining the highest levels of confidentiality and ensuring that the research participants were not susceptible to any stigmatization or ostracism during the research process. I took great care to ensure that the research participants were safe during the entire process, ensuring that the relevant support was available should they require specialized care. Participants were also informed that all data gathered during the CBS would be stored in a password protected folder on my personal computer for five years and destroyed thereafter. My supervisor and I will be the only two people with access to the raw data.

4.10. Data Collection and Analysis

In this thesis I employed CBS to yield qualitative thematic content regarding survival sex in the context of food insecurity as understood by a group of Christian women from various communities in the Msunduzi Municipality. Amirtham (2011:36) maintains that during the interpretation of data the researcher embarks on a quest for the broader meaning of responses derived from participants by linking them to other available knowledge. Data analysis is the search for patterns in data that lend understanding to why these patterns exist (Russell and Ryan 2010: 109). In this study, data analysis was done by critically engaging with the raw data produced during the CBS sessions and highlighting dominant patterns and themes. CBS will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Here I wish only to present a brief explanation and discussion on the appropriateness of CBS as a data gathering instrument and how I use the method in this regard.

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CBS is a community centred, focused way of reading particular texts in the Bible in relation to particular community concerns (The Ujamaa Centre 2014: 26). Generally conducted with groups of people within faith communities, CBS gives the researcher access to these communities. When used as a data gathering instrument, the extrapolated data is carefully documented through a variety of mediums. The researcher identifies relevant and dominant themes and aspects in the raw data in order to compile academic literature. A CBS which covers the entire Book of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible was conducted over a period of six days. The program consisted of eleven CBS sessions. In each session, we addressed specific issues in text and

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context relating to how structural and systemic oppression of women in text and context can lead to food insecurity and the resultant practice of survival sex. Participants were sometimes required to discuss responses in small groups and sometimes during plenary sessions. The rich body of data produced during the CBS enabled the consideration of a range of themes that served to create a clearer understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality.

The purpose of data analysis is to make sense of the data from the perspective of the research participants (Cohen et al 2007: 461). The data analysis process included two aspects, namely, reflection and identification of major patterns and themes. Apart from my own personal reflection, I also met regularly with my supervisor to reflect on my progress and patterns of analysis. In addition, I attended PhD seminars, workshops and writing retreats on a regular basis as part of the PhD cohort system run by the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice at the University of the Western Cape. I received excellent feedback and engaged in critical dialogue with my peers and specialists in various fields of academic research through the cohort system. This dynamic process also included informal conversations with several specialists and greatly enhanced the quality of my analysis.

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During the CBS, some of the participant responses were recorded on newsprint. Each session was audio recorded and later transcribed. I also diarized my own observations and reflections on each session. The large swathes of data collected during the CBS left me with the arduous decision of deciding what data I should include in my analysis chapters since including all the data would have been unrealistic for the scope of this study. Through qualitative thematic analysis, I highlighted and selected the most dominant themes that emerged during the CBS. The first step in the process was accurate transcription of the data. This was achieved through listening to the recordings of the sessions and reading the newsprints. The process was repeated two more times, making sure that that there were no discrepancies. After the recorded CBS sessions and newsprints were transcribed, each transcript was carefully reviewed. The next step was to highlight the different themes and patterns. Coding was done manually by

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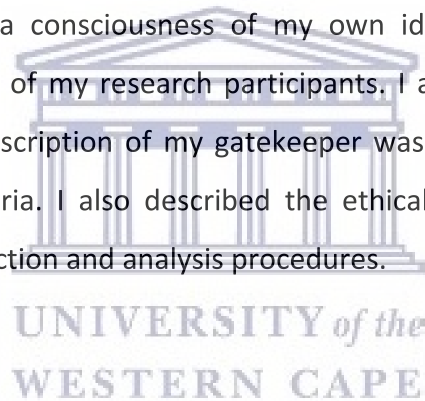
using different colours to highlight recurring patterns, themes and similarities. This resulted in highlighting of dominant themes that emerged during the CBS. The data analysis was in many ways a participatory process where continuous debate, dialogue and conversation enhanced my analytical capacity.

4.11. Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the methodological approaches I employed to explore how a group of Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality understand survival sex in the context of food insecurity as it relates to their particular communities. I discussed the research design, paying attention to the qualitative, empirical, exploratory nature of the study. Foregrounding my use of reflexivity, I demonstrated a consciousness of my own ideological, social, political and cultural perspectives and those of my research participants. I also discussed my positionality within the study. A detailed description of my gatekeeper was given as well as the research participants and selection criteria. I also described the ethical considerations of this study. Lastly, I discussed the data collection and analysis procedures.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Chapter Five

The Contextual Bible Study Method (CBS)

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present the concept of CBS. My aim in using CBS was to further the discourse on survival sex in South Africa and to highlight the plight of women forced to resort to survival sex because of food insecurity. Frostin (2008: 135) notes that within the remit of CBS is the privileging of those marginalized by society for various reasons. CBS therefore provided an ideal and unique platform to develop understanding of the realities, needs, experiences, resources and questions of women on the margins of society who are food insecure and must resort to extreme measures to feed themselves and their families.

CBS aligns with feminist research in that it is a collaborative, participatory, transformation-orientated and empowering method of inquiry. As such, CBS supports the multiplicity, variety and difference of interpretations within a feminist research paradigm. Through CBS, the research becomes a service to the community within which it is conducted and promotes personal and communal empowerment (Singh 2018: 52). The CBS method is particularly complimentary to my study because of its emphasis on the inclusivity of scholars and non-scholars and theologians, irrespective of their theological formation. This chapter begins with a discussion on the CBS process followed by the history of CBS. I draw on the scholarship of West and Nadar in outlining the commitments of CBS and present a critique of CBS bringing the scholarship of West into dialogue with Nadar, Maluleke and Webster. I then discuss the inherency of reflexivity in CBS and its relevance for my consideration of issues of representation and positionality in this study. I describe my insider/outsider positionality within the research and lastly, I present the structure of the CBS programme adapted for this study.

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5.2. The CBS Process

CBS acts as a bridge between particular social justice concerns in the community and a biblical text. The centrality of CBS is the privileging of community knowledge and expertise regarding social justice issues. Through this epistemic paradigm inherent in CBS, the research participants become the primary dialogue partners in the fieldwork process (Frostin 2008: 131). Through CBS, both research participants and researcher are capacitated to be active subjects within the research. Individual and group collaboration creates space for analysis and the sharing of valuable information that enhances the exploratory process. The CBS process allows for both the researcher and research participants to identify, describe and evaluate a particular social reality and together work towards transformation (The Ujamaa Centre 2014: 3).

Using the text as a stimulus, CBS engenders discussion on particular social issues, enabling the biblical text to offer liberationist insights while at the same time placing significant value on the interpretations and insights of the reading community. CBS is inextricably linked to context. It is collaborative, participatory and transformation orientated. CBS is a critical process which takes place within safe spaces (Haddad 2000: 9), resulting in a body of knowledge that is specific to the community in which it is conducted and may have relevance for wider society. Moreover, as West and Haddad (2016: 147-148) affirm, the process enables the voices of participants to become more evident and alongside social scientific analysis, it offers a safe socio-religious space in which organized groups can construct their own discourse.

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5.3. History of CBS

5.3.1. Base Community

CBS can be traced beyond South Africa to Latin-America around the 1950s-1960s. The Roman Catholic Church began evangelization and educational drives aimed at the youth. Due to a shortage of priests, particularly in Brazil, lay people were trained to conduct community based Bible studies. This gave people the opportunity, authority and training to conduct Bible studies

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themselves. These Bible studies were conducted using the 'see, judge, act'[32] approach and was facilitated with those referred to as 'base communities'. In reading biblical texts for themselves in small groups, the youth brought their own context (see) into dialogue with a biblical text (judge) anticipating a practical result (act). These stages remain central to the CBS method. Gerald West and the Ujamaa Centre adapted the approach and named it contextual Bible study (Ford 2015: 28-29).

5.3.2. The Kairos Document

The motivation for contextually re-reading biblical texts in South Africa can be traced to the creation of the *Kairos Document* released in 1985 by proponents of Liberation Theology (The *Kairos Document* 1986, Webster 2017: 217). Driven by their Christian faith and working within the hermeneutical spiral of "see, judge, act, the authors of the *Kairos Document* conducted social analysis of the contextual realities and concerns which emerged in South Africa under apartheid using tenets of Liberation Theology. The *Kairos Document* was a theological critique of the system of apartheid and the devastation it wreaked on the majority of the South African population. Making use of social analysis, the *Kairos Document* was used in the struggle for the liberation of the racially oppressed majority in South Africa. Webster (2017: 217) argues that "CBS was therefore developed in an environment that was already seeing the benefits of a liberationist, socially engaged, and contextually focused Kairos theology."

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5.3.3. The Ujamaa Centre

In the words of Gerald West (2013: 43), "contextual Bible study was forged by the realities and resources of the South African context." It is commonly recognized that West is the creator of CBS, together with the Ujamaa Centre, formerly known as the Institute for the Study of the Bible and Worker Ministry Project located within the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Religion,

[32] While its origins can be traced to Thomas Aquinas' explanation of intellectual virtue and prudence, the see, judge, act method was developed by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn. The use of the method is prominent within liberation theologies as a way to stimulate dialogue and instigate social change. Ordained as a Catholic priest, Cardijn formed the Young Trade Unionist organization shortly after World War 1. The organization became known as the Young Christian Workers in 1924 and rallied together in order to address a range of social injustices. See Sands (2018).

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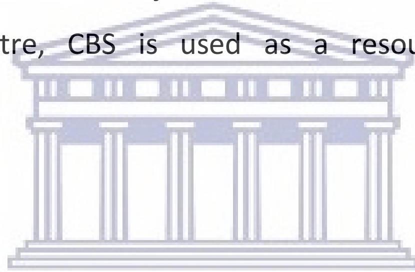
Philosophy and Classics Department. The Ujamaa Centre has its roots in the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB). The ISB was formed by Gunther Wittenberg whose scholarship centred on the 'poor and marginalized'. In 1998 the ISB merged with the Worker Ministry Project under the leadership of Mzwandile Nunes. The ISB became the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research in 2004.[33] These Organizations were established as a result of the context of deep struggle in the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa under apartheid rule. The cry of many Black South Africans from poor, marginalized and working-class communities was, "How can we hear God speak to us in these times?" The Ujamaa Centre responded to this appeal by bringing together socially engaged biblical scholars, organic intellectuals and displaced communities. What emerged from this collaboration was CBS (West 1993: 24). The CBS model developed by West and the Ujamaa Centre is widely used in South Africa and abroad. For the Ujamaa Centre, CBS is used as a resource for personal and social transformation.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5.4. Commitments of CBS

West (1999: 57) asserts that partnership between the community and the academy in CBS is a form of mutual collaboration because these communities offer the academy beneficial interpretative resources. For West, "ordinary readers" of the Bible read *with* "trained readers" of the Bible for social transformation (West 1993: 26). West put forward four main commitments that must be present in the CBS process:

a) A commitment to reading the Bible from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed.

b) A commitment to reading the Bible in community with others, particularly with those from contexts different from our own.

c) A commitment to reading the Bible critically.

d) A commitment to individual and social transformation through CBS (West 1993: 13).

Nadar put forward what she terms the 5 C's of CBS based on her definition of CBS as "an

[33] See: Ujamaa Resources (practical) – Ujamaa Centre – UKZN. https://www.google.co.za/url.

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interactive study of particular texts in the Bible, which brings the perspectives of both the context of the reader and the context of the Bible into critical dialogue, for the purpose of raising awareness and promoting transformation"(Nadar 2009: 390):

1. Community - denoting an interactive process that requires the voices and opinions of all who participate in the study (Nadar 2009: 391).
2. Context – contexts vary across the globe, within particular countries, tribes and locations (Nadar 2009: 393).
3. Criticality – interpretation is always located, motivated and ideological (Nadar 2009: 395).
4. Conscientization – the point of the Bible study is to bring into sharp focus the way in which our faith, cultures and sacred texts promote injustice and point to the liberating elements of the Gospel (Nadar 2009: 396).
5. Change - Once people are made aware of their oppression, transformation can take place leading to change, justice and transformation (Nadar 2009: 399).

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West's work raises questions of how structural inequality and marginalization disenfranchise people and is concerned with issues of social justice. Characteristic of liberation theologies, West's work focuses on "the preferential option for the poor" as laid out in the work of Brazilian liberation scholar, Gustava Gutiérrez (1983, 1988). As a scholar of Liberation Theology, West's work places emphasis on prophetic and context driven readings of the Bible that inspire critical engagement with oppression in society. CBS is based on "ordinary readers" and "trained readers" of the Bible reading biblical texts together in a context-driven way with the goal of transformation (West 1997, 1999, 2013, 2015b).[34] Nadar contends that CBS is an innovative and thought-provoking space, promoting examination of faith and society in new and different ways. Important aspects of the CBS process are sensitivity to culture, context, Church and empowerment. A significant imperative of CBS is the maintenance of critical solidarity between the facilitator/intellectual and the CBS participants (Nadar 2008). Moreover, CBS is a viable way for the scholar to work at the interface between faith communities and the academy around

[34] The context-driven, liberation inspired readings are outlined in West (2003).

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issues of social regeneration (Nadar 2009: 390).

5.5. A critique of the CBS method

Although the use of CBS is popular in South Africa and elsewhere, it has been critiqued by scholars both in the African context and abroad (Maluleke 2000, Webster 2017). In what follows, I will engage the scholarship of Sarojini Nadar (2003, 2006, 2009), Tinyiko Maluleke (1996, 2000, 2001) and Tiffany Webster (2017) in dialogue with the CBS method as put forward by West and the Ujamaa Centre in the *Ujamaa Centre Training Manual* (2014). Departing from West's position of reading *with* the *poor* and the *marginalized*, Nadar reads *to* the *communities* she engages for the purpose of conscientization (Nadar 2003: 187). Nadar places significantly more emphasis on the role of the facilitator/scholar and sees the role of the intellectual/scholar as one who offers the community new resources with which to read the Bible. Nadar's approach is therefore overtly framed by a "conscientizing paradigm" (Nadar 2003: 188). In other words, the primary role of the intellectual is to help participants "become more aware of their ideological oppression" (Nadar 2006: 347).

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In West's approach, the role of the facilitator is to engage in mutual dialogue and collaboration with the community (West 1996: 26). Another point of departure is terminology. For Maluleke and Nadar, the use of terminology such as "trained reader", "ordinary reader", "other" and "poor and marginalized" which serve to represent the faith communities with whom West reads is problematic. Drawing on the work of Tinyiko Maluleke (1996, 2001), Nadar contends that using the terms "ordinary reader" to describe participants and "trained reader" to describe intellectuals in West's work is "ideologically problematic". For Maluleke and Nadar, the terms "ordinary" and "trained" are "power relation categories which add class status to participants and intellectuals". Nadar opines that it is sufficient to declare at the very outset of a project who you are reading with without placing people in class categories such as "trained" and "ordinary" (Nadar 2003: 192). Moreover, the terms "other" and "poor and marginalized" stirs up similar connotations of class differentiation which has implications for the amount of trust participants may be willing to place in intellectuals as well as the validity of their representation

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of participants in the CBS process (Nadar 2003: 194). Nadar's position is that the naming of research participants as "ordinary", "other", "poor" or "marginalized" does not take into account that the community might resist such naming. Nadar goes on to say that framing CBS in this way only serves to widen the gap between the academy and the community (Nadar 2003: 200). Another crucial distinction in the characterization of CBS by West and Nadar is that of context. Nadar contended that in her vast experience of having facilitated CBS, she has worked with people from diverse contexts and with people across race, class and gender categories yet the general discourse about CBS continues, more often than not, to describe particular contexts of poor, Black and marginalized people (Nadar 2009: 309). Her argument is more clearly articulated in the following statement:

> Everybody has a context. So CBS cannot only be for the poor and the marginalized. One of my concerns is that when we talk about context and embodiment in our academic discourses, we talk about women's bodies and women's contexts only – or Black bodies, or bodies with disability or bodies with HIV. But what about the bodies of men? What about White peoples' bodies? Is there not a context for this? Can CBS be done among White, middle class communities or is it only a tool for the "poor and marginalized" as our discourses have tirelessly revealed (Nadar 2009: 394).

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Nadar maintains that CBS is not just a "liberation discourse" but a form of "liberation pedagogy" (Nadar 2009:390). Moreover, she points out that the South African context and global contexts are consistently changing and unstable. Analysis of communities and intellectuals must therefore also change. Nadar also argues that a "far more deliberate reflection of the role of the scholar/intellectual is needed“ (Nadar 2009: 390).

For Webster (2017: 229), the need for CBS participants to be from poor, working class and marginalized sectors of society, based on the realities of the South African context of struggle is problematic and discriminatory towards individuals and communities on a global scale because they might be considered privileged in light of West and the Ujamaa Centre's characterization of criteria for participation. Webster highlights her perspective in the following observation:

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> The specific way in which ordinary readers are defined, which is overtly stated by West and the Ujamaa Centre as taking "precedence over the general," refers to a reader's socio-political and economic context. This description asserts that the "ordinary" reader is "poor and marginalized." The emphasis placed on the specific definition of "ordinary" reader has been embraced by almost all other CBS practitioners…. The forging of the link between "marginalization" and "ordinary" when defining the "ordinary" reader can be found in all uses of CBS. Because of this, certain groups continuously appear in CBS literature, all of which are referred to as "marginalized." For example, CBS is most commonly used to "read with" prisoners, gang members, the poor, the unemployed, homeless and vulnerably housed individuals, and sex workers. If West and the Ujamaa Centre had not emphasized that the specific definition of "ordinary" readers takes precedence over all other definitions and if the contextual nature of CBS was more readily recognized, then those who have later come to use CBS may not have also sought to define "ordinary" readers in the same manner (Webster 2017: 228-229).

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Webster proposes that the term "marginalized" should be revised to focus on specific contexts in which the Bible study is conducted and should be based upon the lived experience of participants wherever they might be in terms of geographic location and common experience of contextually based struggle (Webster 2017: 222). Webster conducted research within a coal-mining community in South Derbyshire, England and posits that in order for CBS to be effectively conducted, it needs to be "grounded in ethnography", not only in practice but also in writing. Webster claims that thus far, CBS has been used and written of in a manner that fails to acknowledge the need for ethnographic contextualization. With reference to works by Maluleke (2000) and Plaatjie (2001), Webster (2017: 233) also highlights West's problematic positionality (West 2006) as a White man working predominantly with Black women. Webster recommends that to address this issue, the CBS process should be grounded in ethnography:

> As I am proposing that CBS should be grounded in ethnography, it is therefore acceptable for a facilitator to be from a different background to those they "read with," so long as they are acutely aware of any difference that may exist between themselves

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> and those they are facilitating by actively reflecting upon this reality and attempting as best they can to experience and understand the contexts of those to whom they are different. Considering the positionality of the facilitator in relation to the "ordinary" reader therefore becomes part of the "praxis" reflexivity of CBS (Webster 2017: 234).

Webster also contends that the methodological refinement of CBS regarding the use of the term 'ordinary' is warranted because its use in the current form is inappropriate if CBS is to develop on a global scale. The term is problematic, Webster contends, because it refers to both the "process and product" of CBS. "The method used to 'read with' 'ordinary readers'" as well as the readings produced "by 'ordinary readers' are referred to as CBS". Webster argues that a revision of these terms and concepts would be far more practical when CBS is used in the academy. Moreover, given the global recognition of CBS, it would be prudent to refine the method in order to focus on a range of contexts and not just the South African context of struggle under apartheid (Webster 2017: 29).

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In this study I employed CBS as a participatory and collaborative engagement with the research participants to gain insight relating to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. I also employed CBS as a pedagogical tool, particularly relating to biblical interpretation. Participants were conscientized through facilitation of a liberationist interpretation of the biblical text of Ruth that encouraged individual and community transformation and empowerment while at the same time, CBS served as a data gathering instrument for this study.

5.6. CBS and Reflexivity

Through its emphasis on praxis or the cycle of action and reflection, CBS relies on reflexivity to safeguard against divergence from what is most appropriate and effective for participants. Webster asserts that:

> The manual [Ujamaa Centre Training Manual] demonstrates that reflexivity is an integral

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> part of each stage of CBS, from its inception and design, to its final evaluation. Therefore, whilst the manual describes CBS as a distinct methodology, it also places equal emphasis on its methodological flexibility and the need for CBS practitioners to utilize reflexivity consciously and continuously to contextualize CBS for the unique group they are working with (Webster 2017: 50).

My use of reflexivity ensured that I became indelibly part of the CBS process. Through adopting reflexivity, I became not just a neutral observer but directly implicated in the data generated (Gray 2009: 498). My constant awareness and reflection on my own ideological positionality, emotions, beliefs and presuppositions prompted self-criticality. As Devine and Heath (1999: 7) argue, researchers must recognize the importance of employing reflexivity in data interpretation. The researcher's role in data analysis and the researchers own presuppositions, ideas and assumptions all impact the process of analysis.

5.6.1. Navigating Issues of Representation

Brewer (2009: 319) notes that "knowledge is relative so there are no guarantees as to the worth of the activities of researchers or the truthfulness of their statements". For Brewer, no researcher "can accurately capture" the nature of a social reality. "All accounts are constructions and the whole issue of which account more accurately represents social reality is meaningless." The crisis of representation, Brewer opines, is when in the written account of research, the researcher is unable to *adequately* capture the lived realities of the researched.

Within feminist research, scholars note that practices of representation are directly linked to production of knowledge and issues of power. Furthermore, issues of representation are troublesome and raise serious ethical concerns because it involves representing the subjectivities and identities of the researched (Hinterberger 2007: 74). As facilitator of the CBS process, I endeavoured to foreground the voices and perspectives of the research participants and critically interrogate my own presence in the research process and my representation of the research participants on an ongoing basis. While it is not possible to ever fully know the

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research participants, I constantly interrogated my own insider/outsider positionality in relation to the research participants.

5.6.2. Insider/outsider position in CBS

Insider

A distinctive feature of insider positionality within research is the researcher's self-identification and the identification by others as belonging to a specific community or group. This enables the researcher to be in a position of 'knowing' with regards to idiosyncrasies, patterns of behaviour and actions that are unique to a particular community or group (Greene 2014: 3). My life experiences of multiple layers of oppression because of race, class and gender locates me as an insider with knowledge and understanding of what it means to be food insecure and vulnerable in South Africa. The shared experiences of struggle and desperation for food with the research participants and my understanding of the inner workings of local communities is what locates me as an insider within the research.

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Born into apartheid South Africa, I lived for the first eight years of my life in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Africans, Indians and Coloureds as per apartheid's racial classification, lived together and struggled together. This was somewhat of a unique situation since under apartheid the Group Areas Act[35] divided and housed people along racial lines. The racial categorization of White, Indian, Coloured and African under apartheid was designed to ensure the supremacy and supposed purity of the White race. While Coloured and Indian children went to the same State school, White children went to prestigious educational institutions and African children went to a separate State school that was even more underfunded than the Indian and Coloured school. It was in this setting that I developed bonds of affinity and egalitarianism with my African and Coloured counterparts, as per apartheid's racial classification.[36] There was always an awareness that Whites were superior and held the most prominent, prestigious and prosperous roles in

[35] Passed under Prime Minister DF Malan, the Group Areas Act was part of the policy of apartheid's grand design of separate development in South Africa. People were separated by race with Whites in South Africa receiving the cream of the crop in terms of land and housing. See Brooks and Webb (1965).

[36] I wish to again state that I do not espouse to this type of racial division under apartheid and identify as Black. However, in order to emphasize the highly racialized nature of oppression under apartheid, I use these terms here.

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society.

As a child I accompanied my mother along with other women in the village to the river to collect water and watched them balance twenty-litre buckets of water on their heads. I too tried desperately to balance a small bucket of water on my own head. I remember that one of our chores as children in the community was to follow herds of cattle, picking up dry cow-dung to use for fuel. I remember most vividly the pit latrines and bucket system toilets we had to endure and the hard-working men who collected those malodourous buckets once a week. The Saturday morning trip to the river which every woman and girl child in the village made to do the week's laundry was gruelling but fun. I remember hunger most vividly and my mother and grandmother's resourcefulness, for when there was no food to eat, they would often forage for herbs in the fields and lure large birds with bits of bread attached to a fishing hook and string. However, these efforts did not always produce sufficient food. Many family and community members worked at the local dairy and a large percentage of their salary was in the form of monthly rations of milk, butter and cheese, the bulk of which they sold to community members for very little. The dairy periodically dumped dairy products on a dumpsite close to our homes and even though the dumped food produced an acrid stench, we often rushed to the site once the trucks had left to forage for usable food items.

My family later moved to a dormitory township in Pietermaritzburg in search of work, but sadly, the move did little to alleviate our lot. My father worked as a waiter and my mother worked in a shoe factory. Both earned a pittance that was not able to provide for the needs of the family. Yet our home was always a place where the neighbourhood children could come to get something to eat. My mother quickly became deeply embedded in our new community and rallied women together often, advising them on what wild herbs were edible, what crop to plant in a certain season and how to build fuel preserving fires to cook meals and heat water because electricity was often not affordable. It was not uncommon for the women in our community to gather in our yard, chatting and giggling about things that were taking place in the community and advising each other on how to cope in dire situations.

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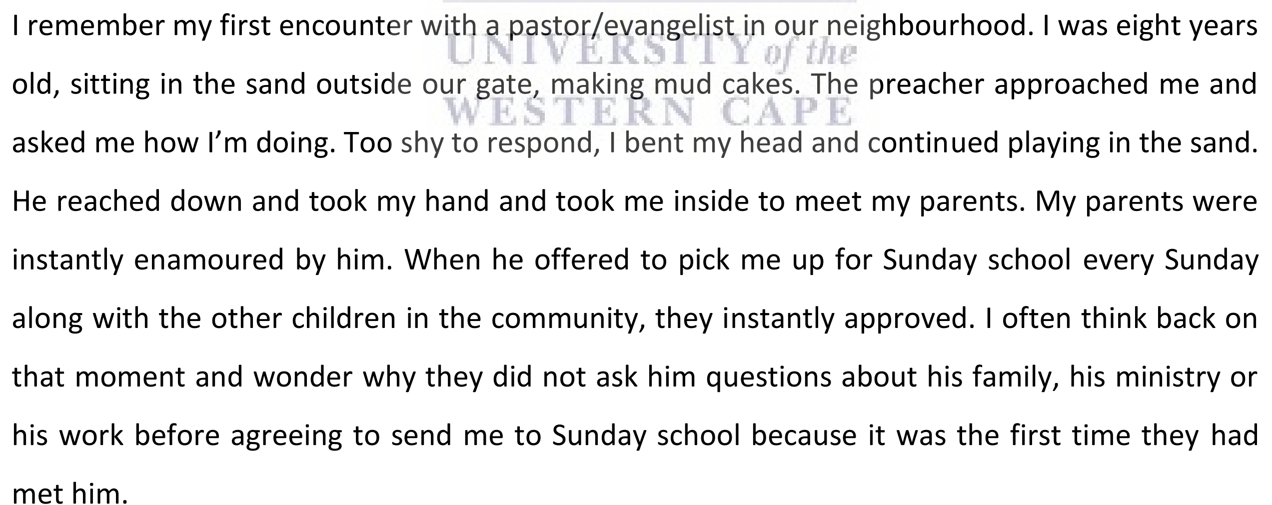
The older women in my community, much like the research participants, were particularly knowledgeable about the inner workings of the community. They were extremely observant and knew of children and young people who ran the risk of falling into trouble because of their vulnerabilities. They would make efforts to rally these children and young people together, share with them their own survival strategies and often, just share a humble meal. Some of the women were deeply religious and made prayer for each other a daily ritual. This level of care and commitment inspired me to seek out the women I chose as research participants. I understood how connected women in the community are and how well-informed they are about the community's particular problems and struggles. However, one area of vulnerability the women in my community, my mother included, was oblivious to, was the Church. Much like my research participants, women in my own community trusted ecclesial institutions and clergy unquestioningly. They viewed clergy as God's vessels on earth and believed firmly that pastors could do no wrong.

I remember my first encounter with a pastor/evangelist in our neighbourhood. I was eight years old, sitting in the sand outside our gate, making mud cakes. The preacher approached me and asked me how I'm doing. Too shy to respond, I bent my head and continued playing in the sand. He reached down and took my hand and took me inside to meet my parents. My parents were instantly enamoured by him. When he offered to pick me up for Sunday school every Sunday along with the other children in the community, they instantly approved. I often think back on that moment and wonder why they did not ask him questions about his family, his ministry or his work before agreeing to send me to Sunday school because it was the first time they had met him.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In a community such as the one I grew up in, food insecurity was a real and prevalent problem. Many opportunistic people saw this as opportunity to exploit vulnerable women and children. Sadly, it was one area of vulnerability that no one chose to acknowledge or address. In my own experience, I recall at the age of around thirteen or fourteen being compelled by my mother to

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attend Church meetings on Wednesday nights. Initially, my mother was the one who attended these meetings but was ill on one particular Wednesday and was unable to attend. Since the minister handed out a loaf of brown bread, a small packet of sugar and a small packet of maize meal and we needed the groceries, my mother sent me in her place. At the end of the service, the minister gave me a double portion – two of everything. My mother did not even question why this was the case but from then, I was compelled to go to Church on Wednesday evening in my mother's place. My mother was so trusting of the Church and clergy that she just assumed that Church was the safest place on earth. Education was a luxury in our community, and it was a marvel that I was able to complete my schooling career. Unfortunately, tertiary education was not an option, we just could not afford that so upon completion of matric, I worked in a shoe factory with my mother. It was only much later on in my life, almost twenty years after matric that I was able to pursue tertiary education.

It is these realities that profoundly shape who I am, my scholarship and the communities I choose to work with. Even though I am now a PhD student and my life has changed significantly over the years, I am still deeply embedded in my childhood communities. It is with these communities I engage and work towards social transformation. My social location as embedded in communities such as these and my life experiences were an important talking-point when engaging the research participants and significantly, found resonance with their own experiences and lived realities. In sharing my own life experiences and listening to their life experiences, a rapport developed amongst us and my research participants were able to discern that I am deeply invested in the well-being and transformation of our communities. It is communities such as these that I identify with the most. I may well be a PhD student and working hard towards a goal that removes me to an extent, from the communities of my childhood, yet it is in these communities that I feel most at home. As an insider, approaching empirical research with this level of transparency yields a wealth of inherent knowledge and a deep, comprehensive and considered understanding of the way in which participants understand and interpret their social world. This in turn enhances the researcher's ability to analyse how participants interpret biblical texts in CBS sessions (Webster 2017: 55).

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Outsider

While I was clearly identified by participants as an insider, I was also an outsider in the CBS process in that my position is also that of a PhD student and researcher conducting research for a PhD qualification. Invariably, this meant that I needed to be constantly aware of the power dynamics inherent in the process. I needed to be honest with myself and the research participants concerning my own influence in the research process, the reason for conducting the research and my commitment to community transformation. My outsider status was further heightened by the fact that I no longer need to rise at the crack of dawn and engage in arduous manual labour in order to put food on the table as is the case for the research participants. My now middle-class status allows me not only the privilege of studying but also means that even though I am a figure within this research and can relate to the struggles the research participants endure, I am also an outsider. I therefore needed to approach the research with a representational ethic that demonstrated my trustworthiness and commitment to the group and the research process. Hence, I chose to constantly and consistently foreground the voices and contributions of the research participants, making sure I understood clearly the points they were conveying during the CBS sessions. When issues arose that I felt were not clear, I made a point of allocating sufficient time during our discussions to get the input of as many voices as possible. I also made a point of starting each new session with a re-cap of the previous session, making sure to allow enough time for participants to voice their own opinions, contributions and concerns. In addition, in writing up this research, I constantly foregrounded my positionality and engaged in a constant process of reflection, self-examination and critique.

5.7. Structure of CBS adapted for this study

Day 1

Session 1

Plenary:

Prayer and devotion

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The entire story is narrated.

Discussion:

What is the story about?

Small group discussion

What problems or issues can you pick out in the story?

Plenary:

Report back

Discussion

Session 2

Recap

Small group discussion

Are there women like Ruth in your communities? Tell their stories.

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Plenary:

Report back

Discussion

Closing prayer

Day 2

Session 3

Plenary:

Prayer and devotion

Participants narrate the story of Ruth

Recap

What is the worst thing that happens to the women in the story?

Is it only widows in your community who find themselves in Ruth, Naomi and Orpah's situation?

Discussion

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Session 4

Recap

Participants read chapter one out aloud

Small group discussion

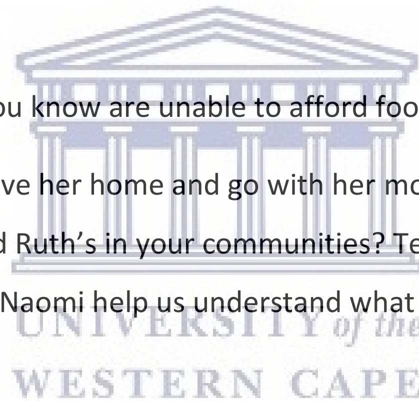
The first event in the story is about the shortage of food. Can you see similarities between the story and people you know?

Plenary:

Report back

Discussion

Plenary: Discussion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Why do you think people that you know are unable to afford food?

What might have led Ruth to leave her home and go with her mother-in-law?

Do you know of any Naomi's and Ruth's in your communities? Tell their stories.

How does the story of Ruth and Naomi help us understand what is happening in our own lives and communities?

Closing prayer

Day 3

Session 5

Plenary:

Prayer and devotion

Recap

Chapter two is read out loud by a participant.

Small group discussion

The word 'gleaning' appears twelve times in this chapter. What do we understand this word to mean? Discuss the term and give some background information about the system in Ancient Israel.

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Do we know of any forms of gleaning in our own communities?

How does Boaz help Ruth over and above the system that was already set in place to help the poor?

Plenary:

Report back

Discussion

Small group discussion:

Do you know of people like Boaz and Ruth in your own communities?

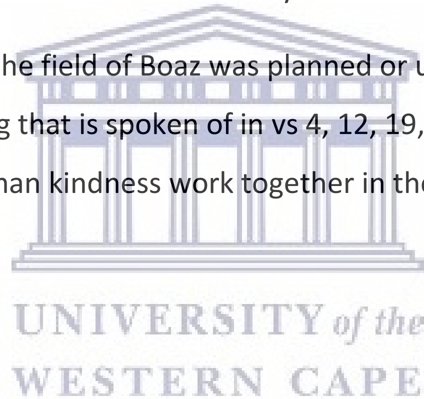
What do people say about Ruth in this chapter?

What do you think Ruth believes is her role in the story?

Do you think Ruth's gleaning in the field of Boaz was planned or unplanned? Why?

What do you think is the blessing that is spoken of in vs 4, 12, 19, 20?

How do God's blessings and human kindness work together in the story?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Plenary

Discussion

Report back

Session 6

Plenary

Recap

Chapter three is read out loud by a participant

Discussion:

What was the situation of Ruth and Naomi at the end of chapter two? How and why do things change at the beginning of chapter three?

What might be going on in Ruth's mind in verse 5?

Discussion

Closing prayer

Day 4

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Session 7

Plenary:

Prayer and devotion

Recap

Chapter three is read out loud by a participant.

Discussion:

Since the meeting of Ruth and Boaz on the threshing floor is described as a sexual encounter, what do you think of what Ruth says and does?

Does this text help us understand relationships between men who have money and women who do not have food in our own communities?

Session 8

Recap

Small group discussion:

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Name all the people in chapter four and discuss the important points of what they do and say.

What decisions are made in this chapter?

How could this chapter help us understand and think about the decisions made by some people we know who do not have enough food?

Plenary:

Report back

Discussion

Closing prayer

Day 5

Session 9

Plenary:

Prayer and devotion

Recap

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Small group discussion:

As you look back over our careful discussions from session one to session eight, what is the story of Ruth about?

What parts of the story stood out for you?

Do you know of similar stories in your own community?

Are there many such stories or does this type of story not happen often in your community?

Report back

Plenary

Discussion

Session 10

Plenary

Recap

Discussion

What have we learnt from reading the story of Ruth in the way we have read it?

How does our reading of the Book of Ruth help us understand food insecurity and survival sex in the text?

How does our reading of the Book of Ruth help us understand food insecurity and survival sex in our communities?

What are the important points in the story? What have we learnt here that can help us in our own lives and communities?

Closing prayer

Day 6

Session 11

Plenary:

Prayer and devotion

Recap

Discussion:

Significant and recurring themes that emerged from previous discussions are reflected on and

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creatively discussed.

Closing prayer

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the CBS process and the history and development of CBS. In a critique of CBS, I emphasized West's position that CBS is primarily a collaborative process in which mutual dialogue leads to community transformation. I highlighted Nadar's position that CBS is primarily a pedagogical resource where creative interaction results in community conscientzation and transformation. I also outlined how both positions are synthesized in this study. I illustrated Maluleke, Nadar and Webster's resistance to West's use of *problematic* terminology and Webster's claim that CBS needs to be further developed to formally adopt ethnography in its processes. I discussed Webster's argument that formally adopting ethnography as a process of CBS would enhance it as an academic resource and address issues of ethical representation in situations where the researcher is not an organic member of the community in which CBS is conducted. I described reflexivity as an inherent feature in the processes of CBS and its relevance for my own reflection regarding representation and positionality in the study. Relatedly, I discussed my own insider/outsider position within the research and lastly, I presented an outline of the CBS adapted for this study.

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Chapter Six

6. Participants' Reading Trajectory

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapters detailed the rationale for researching survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. In addition, key findings from comparable research and the methodological framework employed to collect data was discussed. The main aim of this study was to explore the phenomenon of survival sex in the context of food insecurity through communal readings of the book of Ruth. In this chapter I address the first sub-question, how does CBS support and inspire a liberationist and empowering analysis of the survival strategies of women in the text of Ruth and in the context of food insecure women in the Msunduzi Municipality? The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the trajectory of interpretation on survival sex in the context of food insecurity during the CBS process. The objective is to explore ways in which the research participants initially read and interpret the text and thereafter how they read and interpret the text progressively, as they are being equipped to read using the tools of CBS. In essence, I establish what meaning they derive from the text initially and thereafter the meaning they derive as the CBS sessions progress.

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In analysing participants' reading trajectory during the CBS, I foreground the role of the facilitator and demonstrate how CBS supports and inspires the participants to think critically as they embarked on their own journey of exploration of text and context – reading and interpreting for themselves. Through the lens of Reader-response theory which situates the reader as an indispensable part of the reading process – as valuable and important as the author and the text, I focus on meaning making through the readers' interaction with the text. In essence, in this chapter, through Reader-response theory, I analyse the convergence of reader, text and context (Inan and Boldan 2018: 67) in the CBS process. I demonstrate how CBS disrupts traditional modes of reading and enables the rendering of rich data in the form of community knowledge and expertise while simultaneously holding traditional interpretations in creative tension.

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6.2. CBS: A Liberationist Mode of Reading

The value of CBS lies in the enabling of a liberationist mode of reading in which the researcher/facilitator as well as the research participants discover, recognize, discuss and reflect on situations within the text that finds resonance with their own contexts. The research participants were thus able to creatively envisage and build a new way of interpreting and confronting the issue of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. In *Reading the Bible with the Dammed*, Ekblad (2005: 2) notes that CBS "empowers people as their voice is respected and elevated above the voices of the dominant culture." Providing an interactive platform through CBS, transformation and change was imagined as participants began to consider the reality of hunger in their communities that leads to the practice of survival sex from the perspective of liberation. This occurred through employing CBS resources that increase knowledge and critical consciousness[37] which challenged readers to apply the liberative message of the text to their own context in an accountable manner (Breen 2009: 37-38). Similar to reader-response theory, CBS offered participants the experience of being active contributors within the reading process, allowing them the opportunity to bring their beliefs, values, life experiences and attributes into the interpretive process. The role of the researcher/facilitator was crucial in the process.

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6.3. Facilitating CBS

The skill, expertise and reading resources the researcher/facilitator brings to the CBS process are not described in great detail in the Ujamaa Manual. Often, prominence is placed on the participants with little attention to the role of the researcher/facilitator in the analysis and reflection of CBS. In this study, I deliberately and overtly place emphasis on the critical role played by the researcher/facilitator in the CBS process. I argue that through this interactional reading process, the researcher/facilitator together with the participants mutually construct and explore new understandings of survival sex in the context of food insecurity and read for transformation and change, making us co-creators of knowledge.

[37] Critical consciousness is the ability to recognize systems of inequality and the commitment to take action against such systems. See: http://kappaonline.org/critical-consciousness-key-student-acheivement/htm.

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It is the skill of the facilitator/researcher in the process that affords a nuanced, liberationist reading of a text – a reading that participants are often unfamiliar with. In most instances, participants only encounter this mode of reading through CBS. I argue that for CBS to be developed as a critical, effective research method for appropriate use in academic research, the critical skills and expertise the facilitator brings to the process should be explored and emphasized in academic reflection and to further the development of CBS. I therefore agree with Webster (2017: 127) and Nadar (2009: 393) that the role of the facilitator in the CBS process is modulated in the Ujamaa Training Manual and academic reflection regarding CBS. For example, the Ujamaa Centre Training Manual does not adequately state the skill and expertise of the facilitator from the perspective of conducting academic research.[38] Webster argues that from the perspective of the academic researcher/facilitator, ethnography should be a "formally agreed, non-negotiable prerequisite opening stage of CBS". Ethnography, posited Webster, would afford the researcher/facilitator "contextual knowledge" to design the CBS in a way that resonated with the lived realities of the research participants and "address their most pressing contextual concerns". Nadar (2009: 396) contends that, "…in the academic discourse on CBS, the role of the intellectual has been downplayed and to a certain extent under-estimated…" The role of the facilitator is to assist participants to think critically using the various tools of CBS and to navigate the discussion in the direction of the CBS focused topic. Participants may digress from the discussion and it is the task of a skilled facilitator to ensure that the discussion returns to the focused objective. According to Nadar (2009: 393):

> As facilitator, I have often had to challenge participants particularly when their interpretations have become sexist. This is what it means to read the Bible in community and not individually. It is to understand that there is a wider spectrum of interpretation which exists, beyond the individual, and often pious interpretations which are peddled from the pulpit. Reading in community helps overcome the

[38] See: The Ujamaa Centre Training Manual. The Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. (2014. 13-16). http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/Ujamaa_CBS_Bible_study_Manual_part_1_2.sflb.ashx.

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challenge of the power imbalance that is created when interpretation is left in the hands of a single all-powerful individual. However, “reading in community” should not be mistaken for a valorisation of “community wisdom” when such wisdom may not always be life- giving or liberationist.

A significant feature in my use of CBS is the recognition of the key role participants' play in the construction of knowledge. I contend that as a data gathering tool, CBS has the capacity to reveal knowledge that only particular communities and individuals possess, making it a viable mode of data extrapolation. In my use of CBS, as researcher/facilitator, it was my task to facilitate a new way of interpretation with the goal of harnessing critical community knowledge. As researcher/facilitator, I was constantly engaged in a process of encouraging participants to vocalize their lived reality. In so doing, a conducive environment was created that valorised the voices and knowledge of research participants. In addition, during the reading process, as researcher/facilitator, it was incumbent on me to connect the voices and perspectives of the research participants to my own intersecting theoretical foundations within the social, political, religious, and cultural context of the research participants.

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Through CBS, research participants became empowered, reflective and engaged more extensively on survival sex in the context of food insecurity. CBS synergistically brought together two distinctly different reading strategies and challenged oppressive and life denying views. It was evident during the process that the research participants were not predisposed to reading a biblical text from their contextual perspectives. Ecclesial communities generally follow a different, more spiritually inclined reading trajectory and ordinarily, the research participants were not inclined to interpret the text in light of survival sex in the context of food insecurity or any other social concern experienced in their communities. They simply followed the interpretations of the text offered to them from their interpretive communities or Church tradition, which is evident later in the chapter. As Nadar (2009: 391) points out, CBS is always an “interactive” and participatory process in which the essential role of the facilitator and the role of the community should be adequately addressed.

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6.4. The Hermeneutic Trajectory of CBS

Galda (1990: 261) asserts that the text does not represent meaning. The text only leads to the active creation of meaning by the reader in a specific social context. The postulation therefore is that a text does not possess meaning in isolation but assumes meaning as the reader experiences the text in relation to her/his own context, social location, experiences, norms and values. Meaning therefore surfaces from the interaction between the text and the reader (Mathson 2011). In CBS, West (1997: 6) offers two different types of reader approaches to the text, those who read the text "critically" (scholar/facilitator) and those who read "pre-critically" (community members). I concur with West on these distinctions of readers in the CBS process. In my use of CBS, I emphasize that the pre-critical category of reader (community members) possess community knowledge and lived experience valuable for the generation of new knowledge.

The unique, collaborative platform of CBS provided a reading strategy that offered community perspectives on survival sex in the context of food insecurity (data extrapolation) and was at the same time liberation orientated, providing research participants with valuable insight that inspired empowerment, transformation and change. This empowerment emanated from participants becoming more cognizant of the structural and systemic societal issues that lead to survival sex. It also validates Bordo's (1990: 156) claim that meaning, and knowledge generation is not fixed but contingent on time, place and context. Through the liberationist tenets of CBS, epistemological power was granted to the unique insights of the research participants in the interpretation of survival sex from the perspective of their own lived experiences. This awareness is also validated and affirmed by Emecheta (1997:7) and Oduyoye (2008: 219) who grant epistemological priority to contextual interpretations. In essence, CBS, shifted the hermeneutic trajectory, or how we "read, understand, and handle texts, especially those written in another time or in another context of life from our own (Thiselton 2009: 1), making liberation the hermeneutic framework for understanding survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality.

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6.5. Delineating Ecclesial and Liberationist Modes of Reading

In most faith communities, the dominant portrayal of the story of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible is that Ruth is a model of womanhood that all women should emulate. Generally, it is religious tradition that shapes interpretation and casts Ruth as a woman that is faithful to the God of the Bible, abhors any other gods, is loyal, hardworking and submissive (Anderson 2007: 1). However, liberationist readings critique the dominant portrayal of texts and interpret the text with a transformation orientated lens. As noted in the methodology chapter, the research participants are devoted practitioners of the Christian faith and interpret the text as faith communities generally do. Hence, their dominant characterization of Ruth is as a submissive, chaste, upright and obedient woman. Participants in this study initially romanticized the story of Ruth and approached the text with a hermeneutic of trust. In other words, participants initially viewed the story of Ruth as the authoritative word of God without examining or taking into account the patriarchal world that produced the text.

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In *Reading the Bible Outside the Church: A Case Study*, Ford (2015: 83) maintains that when reading familiar texts such as biblical texts read by Christians who read the Bible regularly, a relationship already exists between the text and the reader. All that the reader is, her/his religious experience, religious identity and attitude towards the Bible shapes their reading of the text. Ford continues that the reader's interpretive community shapes any reading with both reader and text being capable of contributing to the reading partnership based on how the wider interpretive community approaches the text. CBS as a research method is a three-pronged collaboration between the two interpretative communities (the research participants and the scholar/facilitator) and the text. The recognition of the interactional nature of CBS with its liberationist tenets prompted both interpretive communities to focus more deliberately on contextual interpretations. This deliberate focus is as a result of the posing of critical questions of the text that explored the issue of survival sex in the context of food insecurity (questions the research participants do not ordinarily ask of a biblical text). In this way, the research participants were able to envision liberation for vulnerable women in the communities represented in this study.

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6.6. Facilitating an Alternative Mode of Reading: Reflections on the First Reading

In this section, I present an analysis of the actual readings during the CBS sessions. I analyse interpretations that emanate from the group and individual responses that emerged during the plenary sessions. In doing so I demonstrate how an alternative to the conventional mode of reading is facilitated through CBS. The following discussion emphasizes generally how research participants read and interpret the text. The CBS program commenced with an initial reading of the text of Ruth. Participants were requested to read the text and explain their interpretation. The following is an excerpt of the interpretations that emanated from the first group discussions. These discussions were written on newsprint by a scribe in the small groups and presented to the large group during a plenary session.

Group 1 wrote:

> *The Book of Ruth is about a group of widowed women. Naomi (mother-in-law), Ruth and Orpah (her daughters-in-law) … Orpah left but Ruth clung to Naomi. This showed Ruth's commitment to Naomi as her mother-in-law, she wanted to take care of her mother-in-law and she wanted to follow the God of Israel or continue to be a Christian. The story is about Ruth's faithfulness to God and her mother in law. She was so committed to the Christian faith, she wanted to please God and God's people. In her own land they worshipped idols and Ruth wanted to worship the living God.*

Group 2 wrote:

> *The story is about a young widow who decided to stay with her in-law's family even [though] they were going through the hardship of hunger and death. Ruth is an unclean pagan Moabitess (foreigner) but she is drawn into faith and into the lineage of Jesus Christ, the Son of God through the good deed towards her mother-in-law Naomi and sticking to God. Ruth is an example of a good woman of God who loves her family and Orpah is a bad daughter-in-law because she left her family and wanted to get another husband in Moab. She did not want to be taking care of this old woman.*

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Group 3 wrote:

> *The book of Ruth teaches us that God is concerned about all his people regardless of age, race, nationality etc. God does not discriminate. Ruth and Naomi are a symbol of us as people (lost, devastated and empty due to sin). Boaz in the story symbolizes God's nature because he is able to look beyond Ruth's situation, redeems her and also gives back her dignity through marriage and seeing to Ruth's welfare. The story is about a good man who did his duty to be a kinsman redeemer[39] for widows who were food insecure.*

Group 4 wrote:

> *The book of Ruth is about 3 widows, Naomi (mother-in-law), Orpah and Ruth (daughters-in-law). They lived in Moab, a nation cursed with death by God due to its unclean blood-line… But at the end of the book, they managed to go from being poverty-stricken to satisfied. Ruth also went from being a foreigner to be a native through marrying Boaz. The story is about God's faithfulness to us and how God will provide for us no matter what.*

In the initial cursory reading of the text, participants framed the story of Ruth as an example for women to be submissive, subservient, obedient and acquiescent of the patriarchal norms and standards that are characteristic of traditional interpretation. In their preliminary analysis of the text, they construed the text through the mode of interpretation characteristic of their faith traditions. As a group of Christian women who attend Church regularly, read the Bible consistently and are deeply committed to the Christian faith, their experience of the text in the initial reading is that Ruth serves as an example of what a good Christian woman should be – a woman of high moral standing and naïve in terms of sexual experience.[40] Even after I explained

[39] A kinsman redeemer is the nearest male relative who, according to the Pentateuch in the Hebrew Bible, was charged with the responsibility of redeeming family property that had exchanged ownership and/or to marry a childless widow and raise children in her dead husband's name. The Pentateuch is the first five books in the Old Testament and lays the foundation upon which the rest of the Bible stands. A kinsman Redeemer, according to various laws found in the Pentateuch, is a male relative who had the responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger or in need of vindication. See Jacobson (2010).

[40] Ironically, the portrayal of Ruth as one who lacks sexual experience is irrational because Ruth was once married and subsequently widowed. This fact, even though evident in the text and acknowledged by the research participants, did not deter from the dominant portrayal of Ruth.

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and elaborated on two occasions, the possible sexual encounter between Ruth and Boaz on the threshing floor, participants were still inclined to interpret the text in light of their experience with the text in their faith traditions. The possibility that Ruth used her body as a coping strategy to mitigate food insecurity was not even a consideration. Participants simply understood the text to mean that marriage is the only way for a woman to attain economic freedom. Moreover, that childbearing, particularly the bearing of a son, is priority for women. Participants tended to valorise religious and cultural norms and practices inherent in patriarchal societies such as filial allegiance and obligation, at any cost. The research participants' inclination to adhere to familiar interpretations of the text was surprising since all participants expressed their enthusiasm for approaching the story of Ruth differently. Significantly, very little attempt was made to deepen meaning in the first reading.

6.7. A Notable Shift in the Reading Trajectory

As the CBS process proceeded, a shift in interpretation occurred. Participants moved quickly from a swift reading of the text to a closer reading of the text inspired by a liberationist lens. In this way, critical readings ensued, resulting in the generation of empirical data vital for the production of new knowledge in this study. The questions posed in the CBS were specifically designed to facilitate a closer, more critical reading. When probing what problem or issues they were able to note in the story, participants in the small group discussions demonstrated an eagerness to consider the text more closely and contextually. In merging text and context, participants began to embark on a deeper reading that triggered the comparison between text and context. *Ruth and Naomi's story is actually very similar to that of many women in our society today… the widows' are oppressed by culture, religion and patriarchal views held by society*, responded group 1. *We can say the issues we pick up is hunger, poverty and oppression*, replied group 2. Groups 3 and 4 responded similarly. Evidently, a clear disjuncture is noticed from their responses to the first question where participants were simply required to read the text and explain their reading in a perfunctory manner. In the initial cursory reading and analysis of the text, participants demonstrated a reading strategy acquiescent of the interpretations of their faith traditions. However, through the CBS process, following a critical

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reading and analysis of the biblical text, the beginnings of a critical interpretation emerged.

Reading the text of Ruth using CBS created an environment where participants began to wrestle with traditional interpretations as they read the text for themselves and not through the lens of familiar interpretations. Through the CBS technique of asking "structured and systematic questions[41]" of the text, participants began to interpret for themselves rather than uncritically assuming the dominant version of interpretation. It became evident in the contextual nature of interpretation which ensued, that meaningful connection occurred between the reader, the context and the text (Ford 2015: 111). Undoubtedly, CBS's proclivity to align text and context and to foreground the participants' responses during the process inculcated a shift in their interpretations and facilitated a more critical reading.

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6.8. The Interrelatedness of Reader, Text and Context

The CBS reading empowered participants to place emphasis on context. Their interpretive abilities were thus brought into sharp focus. Kashikar (2018: 399) elucidates that reader-response theory transformed the academic study of literature. It changed the trajectory of teaching, learning and collaboration and set new agendas for analysis. Both reader-response theory and CBS never ignore context. In this lies the potential for empirical research and empowerment. In this study, the relationship between the text and the reader was always foregrounded and in constant flux, as participants posed new questions of the text. The text in turn, offered them new insights as they moved their interpretative lenses and sought more contextual meaning. In this process, participants were empowered by firstly developing an awareness of the manner in which they approached the text in relation to their specific contexts and the reality of survival sex as a driver of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. Secondly, participants were empowered to more holistically understand the challenges related to survival sex and food insecurity and thirdly, to share what they learnt from

[41] Asking structured and systematic questions of the Bible enables a critical approach. This does not imply a negative attitude toward the Bible but is a way of minimizing manipulation by allowing the Bible to speak from the perspective of context. See West (1993).

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the CBS with their communities, creating the potential for community transformation. Following the 'see, judge, act' approach, the method of CBS ensured that participants make a conscious effort to depart from ecclesial modes of interpretation of a text to the point of owning their own authority to read the text for themselves.

However, it was evident that participants did not exclusively employ a liberationist mode of reading. Participants vacillated from traditional interpretations to actually scrutinizing the text in order to produce new meaning. In these instances, I deliberately focused on facilitating liberationist, life giving readings of the text. In this process, I became acutely cognizant of what Ford (2015: 30) refers to as the "turn to the reader" in which each individual reader of a biblical text within a group of readers, focuses on the text in a unique way when discussing a particular social reality. This exemplified for me, the ecclesial influences that impacted the biblical interpretation of the text of Ruth by the research participants. A case in point was how some participants valorise male power and control over women in both text and context. For example, the adulation of hegemonic masculinities evident in participants' portrayal of local congregations and communities was often communicated as the taken for granted norm. In these instances it became necessary to facilitate discussions on how patterns of domination enabled by ecclesial, societal and cultural beliefs and practices contribute to the subjugation and marginalization of women and in turn has a direct impact on the inequality and poverty women experience, leading to dangerous and risky practices in the context of food insecurity. Despite participants vacillation between traditional and liberationist modes of reading, through the facilitation of CBS with its focus on liberationist readings, the interrelatedness of reader, text and context yielded interpretations that unearthed new knowledge on survival sex in the context of food insecurity in a context specific way.

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6.9. Reflecting on Positionality: pie in the sky when I die?

When I embarked on my theological studies in 2006, I was not acquainted with the academic approach to theology. I had been deeply committed to a specific faith tradition my entire life. My great grandparents were amongst the first South African Indians to be converted into that

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particular Christian denomination in 1927 which we adopted for generations thereafter. That deeply embedded tradition shaped our understanding of faith and scripture. The Bible was always sacred and spiritual. As a child, at home and Sunday school, my measure of spirituality was determined by the amount of biblical texts I was able to memorize and how meek and subservient I was. As I grew older, the expectation to demonstrate meekness and subservience continued and was measured by how well I aligned myself to the teachings from my family's faith tradition and the pulpit. It was reiterated to hide the word (biblical scripture) in my heart. The Bible was always a spiritual book that I approached with reverence and respect. I never deviated from the way I was taught to read the Bible because I was taught that would be heretical and punishable by hell fire.

When I enrolled at university and was expected to digress from my faith tradition readings, I was initially extremely dismayed. I even considered abandoning theological studies altogether. But, in a class during my first year of theological study, my Biblical Studies professor declared that in his class we would be equipped with the tools to read the Bible in a way that deviates from our conventional ways of reading but that this new way should not distress us since it will lead to tremendous growth and understanding. This new way, he said, was not a "pie in the sky when I die" mode of reading and had the potential to make us prophetic voices in a world plagued by systemic oppression and injustice. A "pie in the sky when I die" mode of reading, he explained, is the idea that we as Christians should endure suffering, injustice and oppression and look forward to the time when we would enter the heavenly realm (die), where all suffering would cease and we would live in mansions and walk on streets paved with gold. This new mode of reading intrigued me, and I began to embrace its liberationist tenets. My theological training thus equipped me with the tools of critical scholarship[42] to identify systemic oppression and injustice in both text and context. Critical scholarship equipped me to see more clearly the oppression inherent in text and contexts and challenged me to work towards liberation from all forms of oppression. In particular, the domination of women and its effects on women's lived reality profoundly impacted my own interests and scholarship. In my role as facilitator in the

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[42] Tools of critical scholarship include the ability and skill to discern and challenge ideological, religious, cultural and societal oppression which may generally go unchallenged and/or unquestioned. See Brodin (2007).

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CBS process, I reflectively acknowledge that I rely on these tools to facilitate a contextual, liberationist mode of reading.

6.10. Employing the Tools of Critical Scholarship in CBS

An important aspect of the CBS facilitation in this study was the reading of the biblical text of Ruth in a way that stimulated critical consciousness. Throughout the CBS process, it became necessary to interrogate and think critically about patriarchy and its impact on the lived reality of women in text and context. The facilitation of employing a hermeneutic of suspicion[43] when approaching texts and focusing on the various forms of oppression of women in text and context formed an important part of my role as facilitator. My aim was to facilitate deeper engagement of women's oppression and the forms in which that oppression appears in text and context. As the CBS progressed, energetic discussion and debates around women's subjugation through religion, culture, socio-economic and political oppression ensued. Through facilitating a liberationist reading, the research participants demonstrated insightful knowledge of the structural, gendered experiences of inequality and poverty that affect women negatively. In particular, some of the research participants asserted that religion, tradition and culture served primarily to validate the subjugation of women. Participant A noted that:

> *When we look at people like Ruth in the community, we pass a lot of judgment on them - saying that they are lazy, loose or stupid. They themselves develop a 'can't be bothered' attitude to deal with the stigma and the negative way we have towards them. But I see now, it is patriarchy who created the situation Ruth and Naomi are in and it is patriarchy causing us to feel this way about other women. Patriarchy use religion and culture to*

[43] The way in which we interpret scripture is shaped in many ways. My hermeneutic (interpretation) is shaped by my theological education which included liberationist aspects such as the critical study of gender and religion and other theological streams that focus on liberations from all forms of oppression. Through these streams of study, I acquired the dexterity to approach biblical texts critically. For example, through the streams of Biblical Studies and Gender and Religion, I learnt to be mindful of who the authors of the texts were. The Old Testament, for example was most likely written by royal scribes. It is highly probable that the authors were male who favoured and valorised male gender roles. So, their perspectives and locations in society influenced the way in which they wrote. Through a hermeneutic of suspicion, I am able to ask questions of the text such as, who is benefitting from the way in which the story is framed, who is being advantaged and who is being disadvantaged? This then is what it means to approach a text with a hermeneutic of suspicion.

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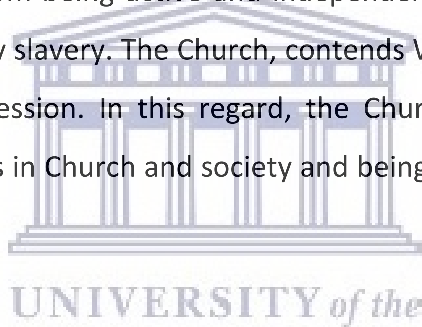
oppress women.

From participant A's statement above, it is clear that the specific way in which Churches present particular biblical texts ensures both subtle and scandalous forms of oppression against women such as enabling environments where women become complicit in their own oppression. It is also clear that ecclesial interpretations create dichotomies between women, ranging from chaste, moral and upright to seductive temptress. Women are expected to comply with stereotypical gender roles. As the participant suggested, failure to comply leads to ostracism, further entrenching marginalization and inequality. Patriarchal oppression of women argues Wood (2019: 2-7), promulgated through faith traditions and other societal structures, excludes women from being active and independent participants in all aspects of life and amounts to modern day slavery. The Church, contends Wood, should rightfully act as a guardian against women oppression. In this regard, the Church has failed dismally by not upholding women's equal rights in Church and society and being complicit in the oppression of women in both.



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A few participants also vehemently adhered to traditional interpretations as if they would be repudiating their faith by considering a different interpretation. It became apparent to the research participants and myself, that we grappled with both traditional interpretations of the Book of Ruth and the liberationist interpretations presented through CBS. In navigating these tensions within the CBS, a clearer understanding of patriarchal oppression, particularly within faith communities was discussed and debated. The following dialogue demonstrates how participants grappled with both liberationist and traditional modes of reading during the CBS process:

B: *Our community still follows culture and religion strictly… Even when your* [sic] *preparing to get married the elders and pastors tell you to be like Ruth and forbid you to leave your in-laws, no matter how badly you are treated. Boaz and Ruth did the same – they both knew the value of the marital home.*

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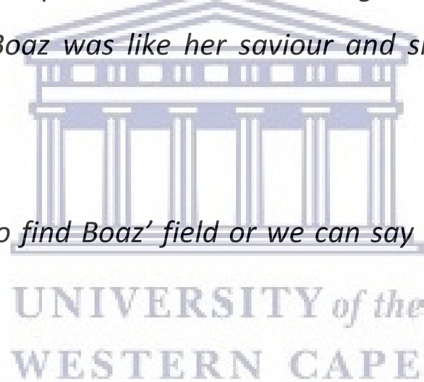
C: *The story is showing us that there is a bad choice and a good choice. Ruth took the good choice and Orpah took the bad choice. And also, when you are young, if you are a good woman, you will get a good husband and he will take care of you and you will get children, sons to take care of you when he die.*

D: *Boaz permits Ruth to move amongst his people in chapter 2 as he is pleased by Ruth's character because she chose to stay with her mother-in-law… As a foreigner, she choose to follow the God of Israel rather than return to her 'unclean Moab family. Even though she was gleaning leftovers, she is now taking from the best crops, not leftovers (Ruth 2 vs 15-16) … In the same chapter he instructs she be given lunch, food that she keeps for her mother-in-law. So, Boaz was like her saviour and she was in a better place than before.*



E: *Ruth was very lucky to find Boaz' field or we can say God was with her and guiding her.*

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F*: In vs 12 … God rewards her* [Ruth] *for her devotion and care… by giving her a good home and a son to continue her husband's generations on earth. Vs 19-20… He* [Boaz] *helped Ruth by permitting her to glean in his field… and acted kindly and with abundance towards Ruth.*

G*: Blessed is the hand that gives than the one that takes. With this kind of thinking Boaz was able give abundantly to Naomi without seeking anything from her in return. Whereas if he did not know of God or keep God's principles, he would have maybe told Ruth to pay by working in his field, turned her away if she didn't agree or victimized her because she was a foreigner.*

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H: *Naomi sent Ruth to Boaz feet. It seems like Naomi is testing Ruth's character, to see what type of women she is. She wanted to see what Ruth would do at Boaz's feet. Sometimes the elders will test a woman to see if she is worthy to be in the family. They are wise, they know how to do these things.*

I: *Boaz brought back Ruth's dignity by legally marrying her…*

Evident from these statements, I recognized the research participants' anxiety at encountering a 'Ruth' they were not familiar with and their reticence at approaching the text in a different way. I reflected on my own restlessness when presented with female characters in the Bible in a liberationist reading during my undergraduate studies and explained the two different types of readings that posed a challenge. We deliberated how a text is read as a spiritual resource and how the same text is read differently during CBS, for transformation and empowerment. I introduced the concept of life-affirming and life-denying modes of reading the text and reiterated that as the readers of these texts, the power to choose the life-affirming elements and reject the life-denying elements exists. This remark encouraged critical thinking and created confidence among participants to differ in opinion. This also affirmed that the CBS environment offered safety where diverse contributions were valued and validated. A new enthusiasm thereafter became evident as participants began to search the text deeper for issues of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. During a discussion in a plenary session following the discussion above, participant J remarked:

I am grateful for the CBS because here we learned how to read the Book of Ruth in a way that can encourage us. I never thought that the Book of Ruth actually describe the practice of survival sex due to famine. This is so new for us. Ruth had nothing else to support her and Naomi with to live. Patriarchy in religion and culture at the time were responsible for the widows being left stranded with no food or long term security, as they had no rights of ownership.

Seemingly, as participants proceeded to interpret the text by themselves, based on their own

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contextual realties they gained confidence in offering an alternate and differing thought rather than through the prescribed lens of their faith traditions. In addition, they began to embrace the tools of CBS in their reading and interpretations through deliberately employing a hermeneutic of suspicion when interpreting a text. I must at this point emphasize that I am not implying that empowerment was instantaneous. I acknowledge that empowerment is a process. Here I wish only to convey that through CBS, there were signs that the process of empowerment had begun, evidenced by participants' responses.

The CBS sessions validated how closer, more nuanced readings of texts facilitate discussion and inspire participants to think not only contextually but also critically. From a place of discomfort at interpreting the story of Ruth as a beautiful fairy-tale, participants progressively moved on to read and interpret the text based on the oppression inherent in the text that disenfranchised women. Through reading in community, in a context specific way, participants were able to resist patriarchy in the text and examine the implications of patriarchal oppression in their own contexts. They also observed and acknowledged the cultural, religious and economic circumstances that make women complicit in their own oppression. Participants noted Ruth's marginalization and oppression as depicted in the following dialogue:

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> **A**: *Aybo! It looks like Naomi is telling Ruth to go proposition Boaz to have sex with her. The fact she says she must make herself look and smell attractive is suspicious. And when she says you must go and see where he sleeps, wait for him to eat and get drunk. Sounds like Naomi is planning to ambush poor Boaz. You know, there are two ways of reading the story, one is when you reading the story in the Church, esontwen* [esontwen is Church in isiZulu. The repetition of the word 'Church', particularly in her mother tongue is for emphasis]*, in the Church, we know when we read the story, even though Ruth is widow, she had a husband, he died, she went to sleep at Boaz feet, Ruth is still a virgin* [laughter]. *Ruth is the example for all of us in the Church to be good, to be the virgin, to do whatever mfudisi* [pastor] *is saying. When we come to the workshop, here we find another Ruth; now this Ruth is all the women in the community who knows umzabalazo*

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[struggle]. We know this Ruth, she is our people, the one from Church is a fairy-tale from ecreche [crèche], *like ured* [red] *riding hood* [laughter and nods of agreement].

Participant A's remark is an indication of how participants grappled with both ecclesial and liberationist modes of reading the text. The participant also expressed that the unrealistic portrayal of Ruth in ecclesial interpretations does not add value to their contextual struggles. Moreover, the participant affirmed that reading the text in light of specific contextual struggles such as is done during CBS, is far more life affirming and relevant.

B: *Ruth used her single asset, womanhood, to ensure their survival. Naomi coming up with a plan was not sneaky or manipulative. In the NIV Bible says, 'One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, 'my daughter, I must find a home, where you will be well provided for' (Ruth 3 vs1). She was merely an elderly woman in the family playing her role in bringing Ruth and Boaz together. For the purpose providing security for her loyal daughter-in-law, her own security, being taken care of, would have been an added benefit. That is how it is done in their culture and Church and we know it is how it is done in our culture and Church. We listen to what our elders are saying because they lived through all this and they know what needs to be done to be taken care of. That is how we will understand that part of the story if we read it in Church. When we read it here, we understand that maybe Naomi is manipulating Ruth and Ruth is also desperate for food and shelter.*

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Participant B's response highlighted how participants grappled with the way in which religion, culture and socialization shaped their initial interpretations. In noting Naomi's role in bringing Ruth and Boaz together, the participant alluded to how, through cultural entrenchment of particular customs and traits, women, particularly older women are complicit in their own oppression and in the oppression of younger, more impressionable women. This is affirmed in the participant responses bellow in which the surprizing realization of what could actually be taking place in the text is comprehended.

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C: *Naomi is very manipulative; how can you instruct your daughters-in-law to do something so immoral? Ruth probably followed her mother-in-law's instruction out of respect for her elders.*

D: *But bazalwane* [a term used in Pentecostal Churches in South Africa, loosely translated 'fellow Christians'], *think about this, Ruth was a willing participant in Naomi's plan. She had the power to refuse but she agreed with Naomi's plan to go ambush Boaz, have sex with him for long-term food security, because we know that gleaning in the field is short term food security but marriage is long term food security.*

E: *Shame, maybe Ruth was scared to say 'no' because of culture and religion that dictates that you must listen to your elders. She was manipulated. Disrespecting them will shorten your years on earth, they tell us. That's what they telling us all the time. Even me, I am a grown up women but when the elders speak, I know I must respect.*

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F: *It is firstly shocking that sexual activity would be documented in a holy book. The Book of Ruth in our experience is always used to advise newlywed women on how to treat their in-laws. There is a saying in isiZulu that says ' thembeka njengo Ruth' meaning be as faithful as Ruth. What Naomi did was disgraceful, especially, Naomi's actions and guts to come up with a plan where Ruth propositions Boaz. There are alternatives to giving your body in sex for food such as entrepreneurship, hand craft or just being a maid, but not many have access to all that, especially in our communities. Many are like Ruth. Ruth could have done something else but because of the times she lived in and the situation in her culture and poverty in the community and her nationality, she had no other option for food security for herself and Naomi.*

Participants C, D, E and F upon analysing the text for themselves, began to wrestle with

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potential meanings and scenarios. This is one of the goals of CBS – to encourage participants to read the text for themselves and interpret the text through the lens of their context, rather than the prescribed elucidations handed down through ecclesial interpretations.

G: *Ruth was quite daring to approach a man. Especially, because in those times a woman was stoned to death for having sexual relations outside wedlock or as widows. It just goes to show that when you're in a desperate place in life, one can do anything to survive. There also could have been a possibility that Boaz would have rejected her. Ruth would have to live with that disappointment and the consequences thereafter - Boaz withdrawing his charity and kindness. She also risked the reputation as a dignified woman. Her interaction with Boaz would be reduced to her being a loose women. Just goes to show that you will have to take a chance in life if you want to survive. If she did not take a chance, she and Naomi would die so she chose to do this means she chose to live and for Naomi to live. That is love, when you love your family you cannot see them suffering, you will do anything, just like Ruth. They say desperate situations calls for desperate measures.*

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H: *Yhooo! This is too much!* [Wraps her hands around her head] *If we read this story in Church and make Ruth the one who is asking sex from Boaz, we were going to say, Ruth was a foreigner. She was doing things that happened in her culture, she bring that thing to* [sic] *her culture to Israel that is why God is saying no mixing in Israel because other people can come and bring the wrong thing to your culture. This is why in the Bible it says you mustn't be unequally yoked. But when we reading it here, we can see Ruth had very small options.*

I: *In most cultures, the men are the head of the family and responsible for giving security and providing food.*

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Participant's G, H and I's analysis signified the participants confronting the text within context. Often, during the CBS, remarks of traditional and liberationist interpretations were distinctly evident. H's postulation, for example, that had the story been read in Church, even regarding survival sex in the context of food insecurity, would have depicted Ruth as a seductive temptress and a foreigner set on disrupting the accepted order of things by entrapping Boaz rather that a woman in desperation for food and sustenance.

The conversation set above signifies how entrenched patriarchal oppression and gender bias is in faith traditions. The extremely unsettling minutes during the reading for some research participants as they grappled with the deviation from the normative interpretations of their faith traditions and the liberationist mode of CBS readings was evident. Participant F for example found it disconcerting that in the liberationist mode of reading, issues relating to sex, a taboo in traditional interpretations, was being discussed. Participants appeared to be grappling with being disloyal to their faith tradition's interpretations as they explored the new and exciting liberationist mode they had just discovered as confirmed by participants A and B. Reflectively through my facilitator role I was cognizant of being discerning and reassuring as I perceived this discomfort. Moreover, I navigated the contentious aspects of these conversations within a learning transformative ethos. By maintaining the focus and objective of the session, engagements were purposeful. This is demonstrated by participant H's digression into the topical issue of xenophobia in the text. Participants appeared enthusiastic to concentrate on their interpretations of xenophobic attacks and poor treatment of foreigners in South Africa. As a socially engaged theologian committed to social justice, I myself was inclined to contribute to the discussion but refocused the discussion back to survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

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Nadar (2009: 392), warns that community knowledge should not be uncritically accepted because the community can "be in possession of destructive and life-denying interpretations" which should be exposed, interrogated and transformed. I agree with Nadar's assessment of community interpretation and contend that participants do however possess community

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knowledge valuable for the purposes of academic research and reflection. As the facilitator, I chose a level of intervention and brought to participants' attention the life-denying elements in their interpretations such as the valorisation of patriarchy. In these situations, I facilitated a life-affirming way of interpreting the text. For example, participant E's remarks about respecting elders prompted the facilitation of a discussion around how patriarchy is deeply engrained in the fabric of society and has a direct impact on the levels of control of women. Patriarchy has a direct influence on religion and culture and controls all spheres of women's lived reality, be it leadership, marriage, household, family, intimate bodies or desire (Landman 2009: 40).

My goal was to explore participants' understanding of how food insecurity drives women to desperate measures to feed themselves and their families. When they began to valorise patriarchal oppression in the text that leads to the oppression of women and entrenches poverty and dependence amongst women, I had to respectfully challenge and interrogate how women are often complicit in their own oppression that sustains and maintains patriarchal norms and standards. Furthermore, it was evident that some participants, such as participant G, demonstrated a penchant for casting Boaz as a hero in the story, likening him to Jesus and the saviour of Ruth and Naomi. In response, I tactfully introduced the context of the patriarchal society that was Ancient Israel where Boaz, by virtue of being a man, had access to wealth and privilege that Ruth and Naomi, by virtue of being women, did not. As noted above by participant I, male headship and patriarchy were interpreted via a normative lens as the way in which society ought to be. The participants' comments above demonstrate two distinctive modes of reading that were in constant tension. The first is a 'pie in the sky' approach to biblical texts, where participants uncritically approach the text based on ecclesial biblical interpretations and the second is a liberationist mode of reading through employing the tools of CBS.

Participants' initial portrayal of the story of Ruth demonstrated that they understood their social, political and economic challenges as separate from their engagement with the Bible and their Christian faith. Although they are industrious women who work extensively within various

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community development projects to uplift themselves and their communities, they view their leadership roles within their communities as distinctly separate from their faith. Participants demonstrated that they did not originally consider biblical interpretation to offer tangible solutions to their social problems. Their faith and the Bible are where they go to for a reprieve from their troubles as attested to by participant A who succinctly stated that:

> *Last night when I was thinking about this I was thinking, if the Church can help us to understand Ruth's situation like how we are understanding it now, we will be able to deal with so many things better. When I go to Church even when we are doing something from Ruth, we are not thinking about how it can help us. We are only thinking that is the type of woman I must be. The one who is hard working, taking care of the family, obedient to the husband. Ruth is the example but now when I am thinking about it, that Ruth, we can never be, we can only try to be like her but we can never be.*

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Participant A's observation about integration of text in Church to deal with the contextual realities of life signified the lack of engagement with the Bible at ecclesial level to engage the deep-rooted levels of societal concerns. It was also suggestive of the normative gender stereotyping of women as unequal to men. The liberationist reading of the text highlighted the levels of inequality inherent in traditional ecclesial interpretations and challenged the participant to question how such a reading sanctions the repression and oppression of women. Clearly, as the CBS progressed, participants began to increasingly embrace a liberationist mode of reading and interpreting the text. It therefore became apparent that through the liberationist mode of reading, meaningful transformation and empowerment can be imagined and envisioned as recounted by participant B below:

> *For me, it helps us to understand, like when you were telling us about patriarchy, about the system that puts women down. We can see that this thing is true and we can see it even now, as you said, it is in religion even in culture and in the economy. Now we can*

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say when we understand this thing, it is sometimes a big problem that is out of our hands most of the time. Many things must change so that women can be saved from poverty and food insecurity.

Co-opted by religion, culture, the economy and other factors, patriarchal oppression disempowers women in devastating ways, leading to social injustices such as survival sex driven by food insecurity. The recognition that this level of oppression is pervasive and entrenched facilitated empowerment and transformation as participants began to acknowledge how life denying and demeaning patriarchal oppression is, denying women full participation in all aspects of life. In acknowledging this, participants began to challenge the subordination of women in Church and society and imagine an existence free of patriarchal oppression.

6.11. Reading with Flesh and Blood Readers

Reading in community during CBS created an environment in which participants brought their own knowledge, individuality, attitudes and beliefs into the interpretive process. All these factors influenced the reading trajectory. Ekblad (2005: xiii) notes that the "life experiences of the reader serve as a key for interpreting the Bible?" For West (2015: 238-239), CBS is "incarnational, requiring real bodies as its social location for meaning that is applicable to their context." West continues that beginning with community concerns and struggles in CBS is not accidental but is at the core of its methodological underpinnings. By asking "structured and systematic questions" of text and context, CBS foregrounds criticality and ensures critical dialogue between critical readings of text and context. This was evident in the CBS session with the research participants as they considered a range of themes. West (2015b: 239) asserts that:

> In the early understandings of contextual Bible reading within both CEBI (2014) and the Ujamaa Centre (2014) we worked with strong notions of criticality, in which critical consciousness was a resource socially engaged biblical scholars brought with them into

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a terrain of false consciousness[44] among the poor and marginalized… However, the praxis cycle of action and reflection has generated a deeper understanding of the fragility of ideological hegemony, as we have come to recognize that subaltern sectors are "less constrained at the level of thought and ideology, since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety, and more constrained at the level of political action and struggle, where the daily exercise of power sharply limits the options available to them"... So we now recognize the critical resources that are already present with organized communities of the poor and marginalized, among which the socially engaged biblical scholar brings the particular critical resources of biblical hermeneutics. In theological terms, CBS recognizes the multiple gifts of the body of Christ as a whole.

Evidently, West's analysis of "critical resources" present in faith communities differs from my own. In my analysis of conducting CBS with faith communities represented in this study, the critical resources which faith communities possess is the ability to understand and articulate their struggles and concerns rationally and intelligently. Participants revealed that generally, they are not cognizant of ideological oppression to the degree that they understand how it operates in societies and infiltrates every aspect of their lives. For example, as will also be demonstrated in the next chapter, participants understood the implications of the lingering effects of apartheid on their lives and the ineptness of the present government to address the plight of poor people in South Africa. However, participants needed to be constantly challenged and conscientized regarding the impact of patriarchal oppression on their lives in both Church and society. In my analysis, the evident gap in faith communities is critical resources to analyse the text from the perspective of liberation. It is a liberationist reading that enables the use of the Bible as a resource to contextually address various oppressive societal structures that exists as is demonstrated in participant C's observation bellow:

I would like the Church to tell us the story of Ruth like this, it will help us so much. In the Church, even when they read about how Ruth is struggling, she is still a different person

[44] False consciousness signifies people's inability to recognize inequality, marginalization and exploitation because it is naturalized and legitimized through the creation of social classes in capitalistic societies. See Conboy (2003:3).

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from this one here in contextual Bible study. In the Churches we are taught to be like Ruth, a woman with a lot of respect and courage. Yes, Ruth is a woman with a lot of respect but there is more that can help us to understand ourselves and our own problems in the communities if we see the story like this.

The participant alluded to the lack of teaching and consideration of ideological oppression as expressed through patriarchy and male hegemony in her Church. The participant, after being conscientized through CBS inferred that her faith tradition's portrayal of the story of Ruth served to reinforce male hegemony. Participants acknowledged that reading for liberation in faith communities is uncommon since the Bible is generally viewed as a spiritual resource. Participants expressed a yearning for readings of biblical texts in faith traditions to address the systemic and structural issues inherent in society and demonstrated the need for issues of patriarchy and gender inequality to be addressed in Church. Significantly, many participants observed that dealing with social concerns in local congregations through the use of biblical texts, would be hugely beneficial. This illustrated the need for a deeper contextual engagement with biblical texts in ecclesial traditions.

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My own journey of discovery upon beginning my theological education also reflected these sentiments. I understood, albeit not as clearly as I am able to articulate and understand presently, that I am disenfranchised because of systemic injustice, marginalization and oppression. However, it was only by being conscientized through critical scholarship that I began to consider firstly, the patriarchal nature of ecclesial interpretations of the Bible and that it is directly implicated in the oppression of women and secondly, the pervasiveness of ideological oppression as it intersects with every aspect of the lives of the marginalized.

In this study, through CBS, participants were empowered by developing their own ability to interpret the text and address the issue of survival sex in the context of food insecurity from the perspective of their own community experience. As Castelein (2000: 160) aptly suggests, interpretation is never innocent - various forces such as power, ideology and the social

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construction of knowledge influence readers. Just as the initial readings and interpretations of the research participants in this study reflected their original interpretive communities, so too does reading within the framework of CBS reflect a liberationist mode of reading. Using the tools of critical scholarship inherent in CBS enabled a collaborative process that had a direct impact on the level of engagement of the research participants and produced a data-rich, liberationist reading. It is unlikely that the reading of a biblical text from the perspective of faith traditions would have prompted an examination of survival sex in the context of food insecurity or any other social concern. Reading through CBS enabled the critical social analysis of both Church and society, thereby conscientizing participants about the realities of oppression inherent in both while simultaneously yielding rich data for this study.

6.12. Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the reading trajectory of participants through reader-response theory. I demonstrated how CBS enabled the garnering of community knowledge and expertise through employing a liberationist interpretive lens. I addressed how the spaces of CBS allowed participants to bring their beliefs, values, attitudes and experiences into the interpretive process, creating a data rich interactive environment in which survival sex in the context of food insecurity was discussed and deliberated. In foregrounding the role of the facilitator, I demonstrated the collaborative role of the facilitator, research participants and text in the data gathering process. In illustrating how a closer reading of the text inspired a closer, more critical analysis of the text, I demonstrated the innovation of CBS to inspire liberationist readings. I also highlighted the interrelatedness between reader, text and context. Reflecting on my own positionality, I demonstrated how, through the use of tools of critical scholarship inherent in CBS, oppression in both text and context which leads to survival sex in the context of food insecurity was identified. The pervasiveness of ideological oppression and how that oppression relates to women having to resort to survival sex as a subsistence strategy was examined in a context specific way. In the next chapter I investigate issues of resistance, agency, vulnerabilities and survival in the context of deprivation and lack in the Msunduzi Municipality.

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Chapter Seven

7. Broken bodies: A Gendered Underclass

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how structural and systemic factors contribute to survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. Structural inequality as a key driver of survival sex emanated as a recurring theme from the data. Framed within a feminist research paradigm, an African Womanism conceptual framework afforded an appropriate perspective of the lived contextual realities of women who engage in survival sex as a conceivable option to mitigate food insecurity where access to resources are constrained and severely limited. Within this paradigm, knowledge is communally constructed and objectivity relationally achieved (Gergen 2001: 803). Furthermore, alternative "truths" are not abolished; they are invited as participants in the dialogue" (Gergen 2001: 228). I consider the sub-question, what are the survival strategies, experiences and motivations of food insecure women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality? I assert that the intersecting situational factors inclusive of agency, vulnerability, resistance, survival and abuse are evident for women who consider survival sex as an option in the mitigation of food insecurity. I discuss how the structural and systemic nature of women's oppression leads to the feminization of poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality. I explore how socio-cultural and socio-economic factors determine hegemonic gender configurations that disempower women, leading to vulnerability to food insecurity and survival sex. The role of religion and culture in the disenfranchisement of women is explored and the use of silence and secrecy as a coping strategy is an additional consideration.

7.2. The Structural and Systemic Nature or Women's Oppression

Food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality is well documented in existing literature (Abrahams 2017, Madlala 2012, Abrahams and Smith 2016, Crush and Caeser 2014, Frayne et al 2005). Madlala (2012: 33-57) confirms that women from under resourced communities in the Msunduzi Municipality lack access to resources and face discrimination because they are

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women, Black and poor. Lack of access to land, seed, agricultural equipment and other resources necessary to sustain livelihoods such as urban or semi-urban community food gardens, laments Madlala, serves as barriers to the mitigation of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. Socio-economic inequality of women is a key factor in the experience of food insecurity and is perpetuated through structural inequalities and disadvantage.[45] As Lazard et al (2016: 3) observes, structural economic inequalities are inextricably interconnected to women's struggle. My research corroborates Abrahams and Smith's (2016) work and research conducted by Battersby's (2015) which explicates that food insecurity exists in the Msunduzi Municipality as a result of persistent socio-economic structural disparities. Furthermore, food insecurity is directly related to the gendered socio-economic oppression of women. This oppression is, first, historic and second, continues to be perpetuated in the present dispensation. Ras (2017: 2) notes that Black women's bodies are broken through oppression in physical, mental, emotional and psychological ways. The oppression of women is a painful embodied experience they endure in order to survive. Structural oppression in the African context, continues Ras (2017: 5), is as a result of the devastating effects of years of domination. Promulgated through colonialism, apartheid and racial capitalism, structural oppression amounts to death dealing forces that deny Black women wholeness and the full human experience.

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Evidently, women and women-headed households in the Msunduzi municipality are the poorest of the poor (Abrahams and Smith 2020, Statistics South Africa 2020, The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government 2017/2018). Many Black women represented in this study live in informal settlements or under resourced urban townships, lacking even the most basic of human needs and amenities such as food, water and sanitation. These structural disadvantages perpetuate women's suffering and impacts their bodies in violent ways. As the most unfairly marginalized of

[45] Structural disadvantage in the form of social, economic and political inequality is not the product of individuals but of larger systemic arrangements in societies. Structural inequalities generally have deep historic roots and affect the poorest of the poor in societies in violent ways. These inequalities are as a result of imbalance in the distribution of political and economic power. Historically, marginalized people are structurally affected in many different ways and these effects have a direct bearing on their health, well-being, economic and social status and progress in life. South Africa for example is not a poor country. However, political power was historically used to disenfranchise and disadvantage Black people. This resulted in limited political and economic agency and had and still has a direct impact on the growth, health, wealth and productivity of people. See Rahman (2018: 99).

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people, women's sexuality is often exploited as they attempt to secure daily sustenance. Intertwined within this political, cultural and social context, their economic disenfranchisement is situated within under resourced urban communities which exists side by side with well-resourced and affluent urban communities. Within these disadvantaged communities, women's bodies are often sites of struggle, entrenching the feminization of poverty.

7.3. The Feminization of Poverty[46] in Msunduzi

The feminization of poverty suggests that women are poorer than men and that poverty amongst women is increasing in relation to men (Uken 2018: 3, Chant 2016:2). This concept frames the reality of struggle in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. The reality of women's struggle is often normalized through beliefs and customs perpetuated through religious and cultural affiliations and economic and political factors. The oppression of Black women argues Gatwiri and McLaren (2016: 268), ranges from the most visible forms of burden to more subtle forms as Black women are subsumed by patriarchal, structural and institutionalized power. In order to address the domination of women through structures of power, it becomes essential to explore the effects of institutionalized power on women's bodies. Structural and institutionalized power results in the feminization of poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality and is pivotal to the understanding of the option of survival sex in a context where women's disenfranchisement is the basis of women's poverty. In the context of this study, survival sex is the exchange or commodification of self in an attempt to sustain and maintain livelihood and food security. This is exemplified in participant A's observation:

> *It doesn't matter who plans it or where you learnt that you can use your body, you know that the situation is bad so even if you like it or you don't like it, you will do it. When you are poor, sometimes you have to pay with your body.*

The dire plight of women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality is pervasive

[46] The term 'feminization of poverty was first used by Diana Pearce in 1976. Pearce observed that women made up almost two thirds of the poor in America and that these women represented an increasingly large amount of economically disenfranchised groups. See Pearce, D. (1976). The feminization of Poverty: Women, Work and Welfare. *Urban. Society Change Review*. 11. 26 – 36.

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and entrenched and is as a result of the intersecting factors of economic and socio-cultural exclusion, gender, race and class (Farmer et al: 2006). The feminization of poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality places immense burden on women due to poor governance in the form of inadequate socio-economic support, poor infrastructure, lack of service delivery, rampant unemployment, failure to address systemic historic injustice and oppressive patriarchal systems (Battersby 2015: 35). All these factors place excessive pressure on women and contribute to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The levels of food insecurity are highlighted by participants and supported by Abrahams and Smith (2016; 2020) who conducted research on the dire state of food security in the Msunduzi Municipality and its effects on women from under resourced urban communities.

In a report on the affordability of food for low income households in South Africa, Abrahams (2020: 7) confirms that the food insecurity crisis in South Africa has resulted in millions, particularly women from under resourced communities, being unable to absorb the financial pressures of day to day existence and food supply. Abrahams maintains further that government fails to understand how poverty and inequality affect low income communities, particularly women. Poor governmental decisions, confirms Abrahams, reverberate negatively into every development trajectory in South Africa, further entrenching systemic inequality that economically disenfranchises the poorest of the poor, resulting in the feminization of poverty. Battersby (2015: 3) argues that, still grappling with the vestiges of apartheid and the inattention and ineptness of the present dispensation, spatial and socio-economic segregation in urban South Africa looms large and as a result, food insecurity is pervasive.

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Battersby (2015: 35) argues that the neglect of pro-poor urban development measures to tackle complex structural and systemic drivers of poverty and food insecurity places the burden of addressing the problem of food insecurity on the most vulnerable sectors of urban society. Hunter (2010: 11) affirms that in general, women are economically disadvantaged in South Africa. Having conducted research on transactional sex in townships and informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal, Hunter notes that the material basis for trading sex is that men have access

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to the most lucrative formal and informal markets and even housing whereas women have limited access (Hunter 2002: 101). Women from under resourced areas predominate the domestic worker field and the informal labour market sector (Statistics South Africa 2018). The high unemployment rate in South Africa, coupled with lack of decent housing, poor sanitation systems, lack of access to services such as water and electricity as well as lack of access to good, quality education contributes to women's vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the massive surge in migration to urban areas further increases women's vulnerabilities (Franye et al 2010: 18). As participant B, noting the feminization of poverty in Ancient Israel remarked:

> *Ruth and Naomi's story is actually very similar to that of many women in Msunduzi today.*

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The comparable identification in text and context is acknowledged by the participant. The present realities of the intensely discriminative systemic control of poor Black women, as bell hooks (2000: 41, 1990: 36) maintains, is ideologically, socio-economically, socio-culturally and politically constructed to maintain Black women in positions of subordination and submission. The feminization of poverty provides an understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity as not merely a phenomenon resulting out of pragmatic need but as a consequence of the uneven power dynamics inherent in patriarchal systems. These power dynamics are enforced through ideological, socio-economic, political and socio-cultural factors that exist within societal arrangements in the Msunduzi Municipality. Therefore, the need exists for both revolution and liberation if Black women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality are to attain economic liberation (Sankara 2014: 49). Revolution and liberation would entail a deliberate and concerted effort at increasing the social, cultural, religious, political and economic power of women. In other words, a more concerted effort is needed to dismantle ideological oppression. As Ogunyemi (1985: 24) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 28) affirm, the full impact of struggle on the lives of Black women include issues around her body, her person, her family, society, nation, continent and location.

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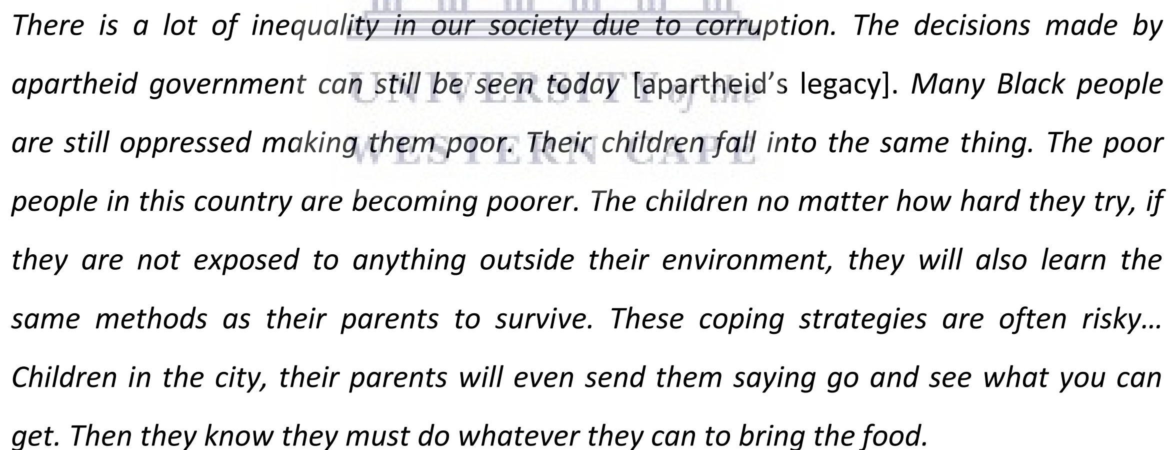
7.3.1. Authenticating how: *women struggle the most*

The economic dimensions of poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality are multifaceted and has a direct impact on the continuation of the feminization of poverty. Ortner (2006: 6) contends that the socio-cultural way in which societies are constructed determines the hegemonic configuration of gender, which is evident in these under resourced communities. Economic status and social disproportionateness are structural dimensions of power in which the poor and vulnerable are constrained at the level of available options. Poverty in this sense is a consequence of structural power imbalances that perpetuate structural poverty. Structural inequality therefore is as a result of uneven gender relations based on uneven access to employment, income, production and assets. In the context of this study, structural inequalities have a direct impact on the lived realities of women in the Msunduzi Municipality and has implications for the consideration of why food insecurity leads to survival sex. As participant C insightfully and contextually reflected: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> *There is a lot of inequality in our society due to corruption. The decisions made by apartheid government can still be seen today* [apartheid's legacy]. *Many Black people are still oppressed making them poor. Their children fall into the same thing. The poor people in this country are becoming poorer. The children no matter how hard they try, if they are not exposed to anything outside their environment, they will also learn the same methods as their parents to survive. These coping strategies are often risky… Children in the city, their parents will even send them saying go and see what you can get. Then they know they must do whatever they can to bring the food.*

The cyclic nature of poverty is captured by participant C. The participant's remarks emphasize how economic exclusion of women from mainstream economy perpetuates powerlessness. Moreover, in highlighting that coping strategies of under resourced communities are often risky, participant C suggested that survival sex in the context of food insecurity is not only a risky practice but is indeed a coping strategy in the context of socio-economic marginalization. The participant affirmed that the maintenance of hegemonic domination in mainstream economies

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(Sturgeon 1997: 27) together with race, class and gender-based injustices, sanction exploitation and structures of power that disenfranchise women. There is therefore a clear link between structural oppression and gender relations in the Msunduzi Municipality. This facilitates conditions conducive for survival sex because food is often inaccessible as a result of limited to nil income and purchasing power. Women are often expected to raise children on their own and ensure sustaining the livelihoods of their entire families. The dire state of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality is illustrated in the following plenary discussion on access to food:

> **A:** *In my community you see women who will go through hardship for the children, she will go and clean someone's house, wash, cook, everything! But the money is small. She can buy food for one day and pay for school and transport. Tomorrow and the other days, she must make something* [devise a plan to acquire food], *she is the mother, no one else can help; everyone is doing the same* [in other words, most women in the community suffer under the yoke of food insecurity].

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> **B:** *Many women in our communities are struggling to feed their* [sic]*selves or their families or there just isn't enough food. Sometimes there is only food on the grant week* [social grant]. *Maybe they can buy 2kg* [chicken], *juice*. *Sometimes they buy 10kg food like to make pap* [maize meal], *holsum* [type of fat for cooking], *and some other small things. They can eat that for two weeks then there's nothing. In our communities, many people suffer shortage of food - men, women and children but women suffer the most because it is the women who is responsible for feeding everyone. Hunger is a big problem in the township.*

> **C:** *In my community, when the women are struggling, it's about no food* [not having access to food]. *If you cannot get money, you cannot eat. I cannot go to the shop where there is a lot of things and say, "give me." I have to have the money! There is no job; the family got no food and job, so there is no food for everyone.*

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D: *Most of the time as a woman you are not alone, you got so many children, sometimes the grandchildren. You must feed them all, sometimes even the neighbour's children, you must feed them all. The man, even if he is old even if he is young, he can only take care of himself. He can even buy qota* [a quarter of a loaf of bread stuffed with potato chips and polony] *or chips for R7 because it's easy to feed one person. When it's the woman, she have to feed ten sometimes even twenty people, she is not alone. She cannot go to the shop for qota, it's not enough.*

Participants' A, B, C and D contended that women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality are not merely responsible for their individual well-being. They are breadwinners and caretakers of entire families forced to navigate life and income generation within socio-economic exclusion (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 24). In their expression of women's vulnerabilities, the participants noted that the complexities of disadvantage are inextricably linked to gender, particularly from the perspective of social, cultural and economic inequality. This form of gender bias is pervasive and results in women being more susceptible to experiencing harsher forms of poverty and destitution than their male counterparts.

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E: *The cost of living is too high. There is tax involved in everything, for example, when fuel* [price] *rise then food* [prices] *rise automatically. The deals our government makes with other countries and the taxes attached to it makes everyone poorer. The government does not make political or economic decisions that benefit poor people. The government only worry about rich people, we in the townships, we don't get enough help. They give us SASSA* [social grant] *but then you get the corruption and everything. Even when you going to get SASSA you must have ID* [identity document], *money to go to town, money for pictures, you have to go* [Home Affairs Department] *for the whole week sometimes to make the ID then in the office they say you need this, you need this* [there are many costly requirements to acquiring an identity document and applying for social security]. *That is more money. It takes a long time. The SASSA is R1700 for pension and R400 for the children but the people who are taking corruption takes millions. They*

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don't think about the poor people but we have to pay tax for everything.

Participant E articulated how rising food prices negatively affect households and lamented the Government's lack of support and remedial action. The participant also made reference to children often being financially supported by grandmothers. Ncube (2014: 114-116) maintains that the Old Age Grant, particularly of grandmothers is often used as a buffer against food insecurity, as grandmothers are forced to take care of grandchildren and extended family on that single income. The situations in which grandmothers are obliged to take care of grandchildren vary from urban migration of parents to larger cities such as Johannesburg in search of employment opportunities to death of parents as a result of illnesses such as HIV and AIDS. This often results in the grandmothers' state grant becoming the only household income with several mouths to feed. Oyěwùmí (2016:12) observes that Black women in particular, have been "subalternized" and marginalized, preventing them from being active agents in resisting, disrupting and contesting patterns of power that disenfranchise them economically. Moreover, perceiving women as inferior is central to the oppressive social structures imposed on them. Hence, the intersecting of gender, race and class positions them further within a vulnerable space including the domination of their bodies.

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> **F:** *Many people in our communities do not have enough food to last the whole month. Most people pay their bills. Electricity is a lot, they have to pay transport for school, and sometimes they have to have transport to go to the hospital because they are sick so they only buy food after all that. Just like in the story, Ruth is going to find food because there is no money. Is the same for many women, they have to go every day and find food. Like look for small work to do then you get pay for one day and you buy the food for one day. Just like Ruth, women here are going out to find food – it is the work of a woman to feed the family, she must find food to feed them. If she do not bring food, they will not eat.*

Participant F confirmed the high cost of living in South Africa, and the failure of Government to

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adequately support women in under resourced communities as affirmed by Abrahams (2020: 1-7). These remarks brought to light the dire state of urban poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality and the crippling effects such poverty has on women in particular. The ineptness of Government at local and national levels and failure to provide institutional support with regard to housing, infrastructure, nutrition, and livelihood support are factors participants identify as reasons why poverty among women is entrenched and why women in particular occupy subordinate roles in society.

Participant G reflectively articulated such subordinate roles occupied in their society:

> *Sometimes I was asking myself* [sic], *why is it always the women who is struggling for everything? Women struggle the most! The contextual Bible study helps me to understand why women struggle. It is a good education for me but I want more, I want things to be better for our women. It cannot be that women were suffering the same problems in Judah and are suffering the same problems now. What can we do?*

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Participant G acknowledged the biblical reference and further questioned how it pertains to their present realities. Kruger (2017: 23) details how women in the Msunduzi Municipality earn far less than men even when job descriptions are equal. Moreover, unequal employment opportunities further marginalize women as large numbers of women are relegated to the informal sectors of income generation. This gender stratification results in the disenfranchisement of women. Kruger (2017: 23-24) contends that the basis for women's empowerment is access to education and skills development. The marginalization of women in the formal sector of employment perpetuates the disempowerment of women as well as violence against women through gender stratification. Furthermore, argues Kruger, the scarcity of empowerment and development opportunities for women hinders access to meaningful employment.

In addition, sexual and reproductive health services for women are not given sufficient attention, further entrenching women's disempowerment. Kruger argues that gender

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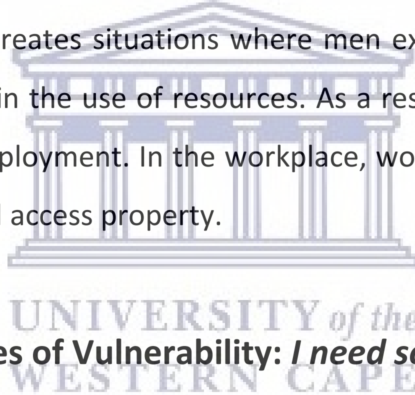
insensitive legislation fails to protect women in the workplace. Also, the practical implementation of legislation that takes into consideration women's inheritance and property rights needs refinement. Kruger further elaborates that there is a need for a more deliberate integration of national plans and policies to foster gender awareness at district and local levels of the Msunduzi Municipality. The universal uneven work burden of women further marginalizes and discriminates against women as women operate in multiple roles and men fail to share in roles such as family responsibility. Moreover, women's participation in leadership roles at the level of policymaking, management and in domestic matters is disproportionate to that of men. Resultantly, women are unduly affected in times of financial crisis due to lack of participation at national and domestic levels. Importantly, argues Kruger (2017: 24), patriarchal cultural oppression of women persists. The mind-set that men are to be heads of work environments and households creates situations where men exercise power and control over women in decision making and in the use of resources. As a result, in many instances, women are even denied the right to employment. In the workplace, women are often denied the right to supervise men or manage and access property.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7.3.2. Capturing the Nuances of Vulnerability: *I need some formula for the baby*

The narrative below brings to light the personal implications of what it means to be vulnerable to food insecurity and the mechanisms of power and control that shape women's existence in the context of limited access and options (Valadier 2018: 503).

> **A:** *But in the community… it is not like that most of the time, this thing of not having food for the children can make the women to do anything. People think that they know who is selling and buying sex, but it is not like that in the communities where people do not have food to eat. Sometimes it does not happen like that. Maybe the child needs formula* [milk] *and the clinic is saying there is no more formula for the month. Then she will call this man who she always call when she need something. She will just say to him, "I need some formula for the baby." Then he will bring the formula and he will sleep with the woman. He do not have to say, "Ok, here is the formula, give me sex." They*

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understand what is going to happen when she call him to bring formula. This food insecurity is very deep. It does not have to be the women who is … standing in the street who can do survival sex, it is the normal woman who wants to feed her child.

Participant A's remarks are indicative of the lived realities as well as the implicit and intimate exchange process as a survival strategy employed by women with limited access and options. In situations of powerlessness, the basis of survival is located in who has access. Women's ability to overcome lack is at the core of the use of survival sex in order to satisfy an immediate need for sustenance and livelihood. Evident from participant A's narrative, survival sex in the context of food insecurity is considered agential because women effectively navigate food insecurity under highly constrained conditions. In this light, women who resort to survival sex do not view themselves as passive victims but active agents capable of making rational choices to satisfy an immediate need for food. Participant A viewed this as agential action in which women actively resist the real danger of starvation and malnutrition for themselves and their children.

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These agential capacities are validated and affirmed irrespective of social and economic status. Nnaemeka (2005:57) asserts that, "African women are not problems to be solved. Like women everywhere, African women have problems. More important, they have provided solutions to these problems. We are the only ones who can set our priorities and agenda." Reasserting Nnaemeka's justification, these women themselves must determine their priorities in the struggle against food insecurity. Okome (1999: 11) too asserts such agency further by conceding that, "African women, like any other group, are able to articulate their needs, evaluate the alternative courses of action, and mobilize..." Participant A demonstrated how, despite being denied access and means to guarantee food security, women who resort to survival sex demonstrate individual agency in the context of structural disparity that leads to food insecurity. Ogunyemi's statement (1985: 73) supports Okome's assertion:

A Black woman is not as powerless in the Black world as the White woman is in the

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White world; the Black woman, less protected than her White counterpart has to grow independent. After each mental upheaval, the Black woman knows in her subconscious mind that she must survive because she has other people without resources depending on her. In a positive about-face she usually recovers through a superhuman effort.

The survival that Ogunyemi alludes to found resonance with participant B's narrative and demonstrates how agential negotiations occur even within an intimate relationship:

B: *Even the father of the children, maybe he does not stay with the woman then the child needs something like iuniform* [school uniform] *or books or food. When she tells him, he will want sex. If she want the things for the child, she will have to do it, or to buy for December* [festive season]*, she must give him sex first then he will buy it...It can even happen in a marriage where if the wife wants money to buy food for the family she has to have sex with the husband. He holds the money so she has to obey.*

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Evident in participant B's narrative is how hegemonic masculinities perpetuate survival sex even within the context of marriage or intimate partner relationships (Stoebenau et al 2016: 189). This culturally dominant form of masculinities serves to reproduce gender inequality and women's vulnerability. The need for a wife to exchange sex for food and basic needs exemplifies how hegemonic masculinities exploit women's vulnerabilities in marginalized communities. Evident also from participant B's response is that hegemonic socio-cultural configuration of gender roles is yet another site of contestation relating to survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

In under-resourced communities in the Msunduzi Municipality, opportunities to resist hunger and starvation are limited. The question then becomes, how do we speak of agency when examining survival sex in the context of food insecurity? A useful way of understanding this agential action is King and Epston's (2009: 9-13) conception of *unsuffering*. Using the term *unsuffering* as a verb, King and Epston conceptualize it as an act of undoing suffering. The idea

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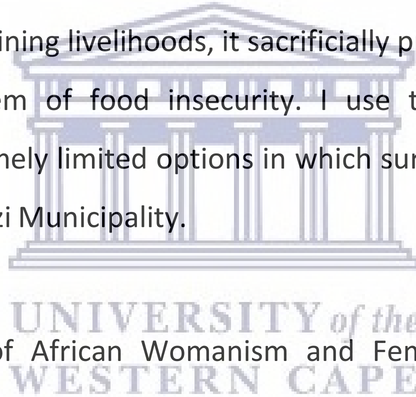
that one did not have to remain trapped in suffering signifies a form of constrained agency in which women resist hunger and lack in the context of highly limited options. The term *unsuffering* does not suggest the absence of suffering but encompasses it, acknowledging the potential to undo that suffering, albeit within the framework of my study, temporarily. *Unsuffering* then is agential action that chooses to name the suffering and participate in choices that would change the effects of a particular type of suffering. In propositioning someone to exchange sex for food, women are able to move from a place of diminished agency to increased agency, albeit constrained. So, while suffering and lack diminish women's agential power, through sacrificial initiative, women who resort to survival sex in the context of food insecurity are actually *unsuffering* themselves and temporarily resisting starvation and lack. This action can therefore be seen as a sacrificial and agential, short-term solution to food insecurity. While survival sex is not a way of sustaining livelihoods, it sacrificially provides short term relief for the structural and systemic problem of food insecurity. I use the analogy of *unsuffering* to emphasize the context of extremely limited options in which survival sex in the context of food insecurity occurs in the Msunduzi Municipality.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In an article on the merits of African Womanism and Feminisms, Sachikonye (2010: 1) generalizes that Black women have the ability to set their own agendas and priorities and are strong innovative agents and decision makers in their own contexts. However, for women living in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality, limited scope and options restrict agency and results in women eking out meagre livings and prioritizing obtaining food for the day. Uken (2018: 25-26), argues that it is not only the feminization of poverty but the feminization of responsibility and obligation and the feminization of survival that is a representation of women's increasing ability to deal with poverty in environments of progressively less choice. The link between equality and poverty, argues Uken, should not be "oversimplified". While monetary poverty is the main criterion in the feminization of poverty, due consideration must also be given to gender privilege in terms of capabilities and training, livelihoods, women's subjectivities and social exclusion. Understanding how gender poverty and gender equality conflate, asserts Uken, facilitates deeper understanding of how women are thrown into poverty against all efforts to resist it. In the Msunduzi Municipality, as is evidenced

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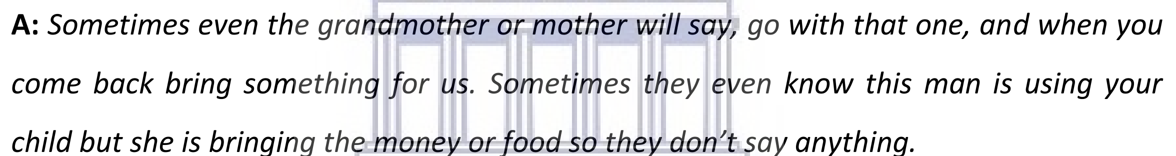
by the participant narratives, cultural connotations of hegemonic masculinity perpetuate itself with the approval and consent of institutionalized power, leading to the feminization of poverty and survival.

Another crucial aspect raised by the research participants is the undeniable perils associated with survival sex in the context of overwhelming lack and limited options. This became a significant point of discussion during the CBS as participants observed both agential action and sheer exploitation and harm. When confronting the presence and practice of survival sex, participants detailed several associated vulnerabilities. Most apparent was the abuse of young women and girls:



> **A:** *Sometimes even the grandmother or mother will say, go with that one, and when you come back bring something for us. Sometimes they even know this man is using your child but she is bringing the money or food so they don't say anything.*

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Participant A's comment is evidence of the damaging manifestation of sexual abuse in the communities represented in this study and the inability of parents and guardians to protect young girls in the context of food insecurity. Moreover, the participants also acknowledged the culpability of parents and guardians in the sexual exploitation of young girls.

> **B:** *Other mothers tell their daughter to fall pregnant by rich men or even condition them to always look for men who can take care of them in the longer term at a very young age. Children are being told to go and have sex for food. The man maybe does not want an older woman but he want a child, like 10 or 11 years or even a teenager.*

> **C:** *…Their mother is like their pimp, just like you said, Naomi is Ruth's pimp,* [gesturing to a participant]. *It happens a few times in the month and everyone knows what's*

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happening there but people are very afraid of the lady, she fights with everyone so they don't say anything.

Participant C's use of the word "pimp" to describe the mother in her narrative and Naomi in the biblical text is jarring and brought to light the role of parent/guardian figures in the exploitation and facilitation of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Participant B also noted the link between poverty and the sexual exploitation of children. The sexual exploitation of children in Sub-Saharan Africa for remuneration, be it cash, or kind has often been linked to intermediaries such as parents, guardians, relatives or teachers (Lalor 2004: 439). Systemic inequalities, unemployment, poverty and lack of education has been cited as the economic challenges that make sexual exploitation of children in South Africa so rampant. It is estimated that 68% of South African children live in poor households and of that, 20% are orphans. As families struggle for survival, children become targets for abuse and exploitation (Child Welfare South Africa 2021).

Participants D and E's responses prompted examination of the nature of vulnerability of young women and girls and the limited availability of support.

D: *But if this is reported, the police will investigate, and someone will help the young girls.*

E: *No!!! once she was having a fight with a neighbour and the daughters started attacking the neighbour, they said their mother does not pimp them, but we know it's happening.*

Participant D's response brought into focus the nature of legal responses to the exploitation of children, particularly young girls. Basson et al (2019: 3) observes that there is a lack of coordination between governmental departments such as the South African Police and the Department of Social Development regarding the sexual exploitation of children. Resultantly, there is a lack of guidance and knowledge sharing. This significantly affects the level of

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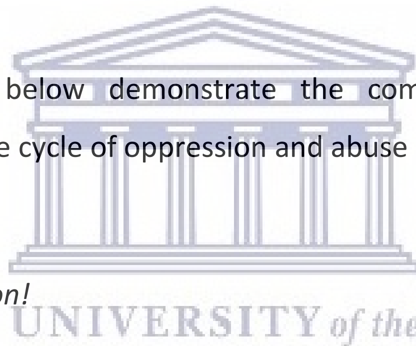
reporting, investigation and intervention measures vis-à-vis the rampant nature of sexual abuse of children. Limited resources, both financial and human, restrict effective responses. A key reason for limited intervention measures in South Africa is the failure by government to prioritize the sexual exploitation of children, thus not making sufficient resources available to effectively address the situation. This significantly hampers the availability of support systems and resources. The normalization of the commodification of children's bodies, particularly the bodies of young girls, in exchange for food and commodities in participant E's remark is indicative of inadvertent community consent. Basson et al (2019: 31) notes that while systems of protection exist in the country, under reporting of instances of exploitation of children limits efforts to effectively protect children at community level.



The participant observations below demonstrate the complexities of exploitation in communities that perpetuate the cycle of oppression and abuse of those most vulnerable.

F: *Such a helpless situation!*

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G: *Yes, but it happens everywhere, maybe this is the only way that family can get food to eat. I know it's wrong but it happens everywhere.*

H: *In my community, there are some young children who also sell their bodies for food. The people they know this is happening, they even know which ones are going there for sex but they don't say nothing.*

I: *Yes, we know of stories like Ruth in our communities where families sell their daughters, prostitute their children or actively seek out men to provide food or security. On the radio, there was a grandmother who got arrested who prostituted her 8-year-old grandchild to older men in exchange for food and money. Girls are discouraged from dating boys their age but are encouraged to date older wealthier men. This has a huge influence on the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and young people developing*

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mental health [issues] *such as depression. Leading such a lifestyle must have some sort of impact on a person's wellbeing.*

J: *Women can put themselves and their children in dangerous situations! Boaz could have been a rapist or a serial killer or something bad! There are many women I know who were beaten or lost their lives because they were food insecure and just needed to feed the children.*

The participants acknowledged the contextual similarities of the exchange of sex for food in text and context and highlighted the perilous risks associated with the practice. Their responses affirmed that sexual exploitation in the Msunduzi Municipality is as a result of overwhelming lack – lack of access to resources, support, education, shelter and most notably, lack of food. Furthermore, the observations revealed that inadvertent community consent perpetuates silence regarding sexual exploitation.

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Institutionalized hegemonic power structures ensure that women and children are at the very bottom of the food chain and reliant on men for their survival needs. Patriarchal mechanisms entrench violence and abuse of vulnerable women and children, even perpetuated through familial connections. Much of this violence is sustained through a culture of silence. Participants also demonstrated that community silence can sometimes be a mechanism communities and affected women use to avoid embarrassment and shame or to ignore the situation because of a feeling of hopelessness. Participants noted that this is a worrying trend in the Msunduzi Municipality. The conversation above alludes to how, where lack characterizes existence, the ruthlessness of life elicits abusive, violent and exploitive social arrangements where women and children endure unspeakable hardships, even by those meant to protect and nurture them. This is indicative of what Mercer (2005: ix) terms as, "the violence of poverty" where women and children are predisposed to harm and sexual abuse because of poverty and lack. Gatwiri and McLaren (2016:267) articulate that any exploration of the oppression of women requires reflection on the most oppressive practices towards women and the embedded culture of

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violence from men towards women. Despite decades of resistance and theorizing of such oppression, argues Gatwiri and McLaren, women and girls continue to be confronted by such vulnerable lived realities. In addition, the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases is largely a result of gendered oppression. Oppressive practices such as child and prepubescent marriages, young girls used as sex objects for men and the sexual barter and trafficking of women and girls are all aimed at controlling women's sexuality and disciplining their bodies (Gatwiri and McLaren 2016: 268).

South Africa has witnessed an increase in cases of sexual exploitation of children and young women. There is a need for a multi-sectoral response comprising of committed professionals and comprehensive, structured training systems to deal with this level of exploitation. At present, this level of intervention is hindered by a shrinking pool of trained professionals (Basson et al 2019: 3). The observation that families sometimes perpetuate the oppression of women is corroborated by Patra and Singh (2015: 45) who argue that women who are often victims of oppression are sometimes the strongest enablers of oppressive practices as patriarchal oppression subsumes them, leading to a host of struggles.

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7.4. *Religion and culture are like unwritten laws and policies that dictate how women should live*

In many cultures, especially where religiosity is deeply entrenched, the socio-cultural and religious aspects of life are inextricably connected to the personal. In this environment, gender disparities are intensely engrained and often subdue and subjugate women through patriarchal ideologies and norms. A significant development as the CBS progressed was the impact religion, specifically Christianity, and culture has within the communities represented in this research. This impact inevitably shapes the lives of women. Participants repeatedly narrated how the power dynamics inherent within heterosexual relationships promulgated by their Christian faith and culture disempowered women in various ways. During a group discussion on what the problems women in the story encounter, participants noted the following:

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Group 1:

Ruth, Naomi and Orpah's story is actually very similar to that of many women in our society today. They find themselves disenfranchised, desolate and empty (Ruth 1vs3). This because even though women decide how money is spent in the household, the men have real ownership of assets. Which means that when they [husbands] *die the money belongs to the husband's family. This causes women to be displaced when the men die. Also, women in the widows' situation are oppressed by culture, religion and patriarchal views held by society. So we can say the issues we pick up is hunger and poverty because of the oppression of women through patriarchy in society, culture and even in our faith.*

Group 2:

In our cultures, it is shameful for women to return from marriage. She is seen as a failure, even if her husband has died. To the point that your husband's oldest, youngest or his closest relative 'uzokungena' (remarry you/ be like the kinsman redeemer/ assume your husband's role). In this process all your late husband's assets will belong to him, you will answer to him. Even when you are the one who worked hard to accumulate it, it will belong to the one who assumes your husband's role. This is done so that the wealth stays in the family. If you do decide to leave anyway, there is stigma and shame associated with returning home as Orpah did. To be a widow is a big problem, that's the big one. Then there is hunger, when you cannot find food where you are you must go and look for it or die. It is the same in the story, culture is the big problem, and women have to do what the culture says. If you want to be a good woman, you have to stay with the in-laws. Maybe Orpah's family is better than Ruth's, more understanding. If Ruth went back, her family was going to say, go back to your husband's house, you are no longer our problem.

Evident in Group 1 and 2's discussion is the correlation between the patriarchal oppression of women through religion and culture in the story of Ruth and in their own contexts. Participants

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affirmed that through economic disenfranchisement within marriage and disinheritance through widowhood, women are deprived of economic resources vital for survival. Evident from the group discussions is that that male hegemony promulgated through religion and culture plays an integral role in the socio-economic disempowerment of women in the Msunduzi Municipality.

Group 3:

… so more than anything Ruth saw that she would have a better chance at survival if she clung to her mother-in-law as she vowed in vs 16-17. Sometimes poverty with your own family, flesh and blood is so bad that other poverty elsewhere even looks better. Because in your own family, they expect you to be the doormat because you returned home, meaning you are now a disgrace to them.

Group 4:

The biggest problem for women in the story is poverty because it is the women who suffer when there is poverty and to be a woman means you cannot do anything for yourself because the man is the boss. If the wife died the husband will still have the land and take a new wife or not. But for women it is bad because she cannot get a job she has to rely on the husband and sons. The issues are poverty, death, and no one to help you. If you are married and your husband dies you cannot go back to your father's house, you have to stay with the in-laws. That is what we are taught in our Church and our culture.

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Group 3 and 4 referenced how oppressive religious and cultural practices alienate disenfranchised women and perpetuates the poverty and vulnerability of women. The institutionalization of male hegemonic power, proliferated through religion and culture, as noted by Group 4, enables systemic oppression that leads to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. This sentiment is also confirmed by Oyěwùmí (2016: 17). Christianity is the predominant religion in the Msunduzi Municipality and has since its inception in South Africa, promoted and entrenched hegemonic masculinities in both Church and society, to the detriment of women in all spheres of social and personal life (Oyěwùmí 1997:136). Through

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entrenching male dominance and the domestication of women as child bearers and caregivers alone, women are effectively subjugated. This domination is reflected in how the girl child is raised to assume subordinate roles in relation to the boy child, in how young women are groomed to be helpmates and submissive to men, in how marriage is contracted within the Christian faith and culture and in how widows are relegated to the fringes of society. Religion and culture opines Mangena (2013:8), contributes directly to the realities of women's suffering.

In a plenary discussion on the effects of the intersections of religion and culture on under resourced women in the Msunduzi Municipality, participants A and B noted the following:

> **A:** *I think religion, cultural and social norms may have a positive or negative impact on how the vulnerable, women, children and the elderly, access food. Religion and culture are like unwritten laws and policies that dictate how women should live.*
>
> **B:** *I think it's because of our culture how we think. We are also taught how to behave by our Church leaders. It is our grandmothers and mothers too who are teaching us these things from our culture and from the Bible. There are many good things in our faith and culture. We can go anywhere, but our hearts will always be to the place we were born and the people who teach us in our culture. The same with esontwen* [Church], *we love ukuthandaza* [to pray and worship], *bazalwane* [congregants], *we love esontwen* [Church].

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Significantly, participants A and B acknowledged that hierarchical social arrangements promulgated through religion and culture has the potential to, and in many instances, does oppress women. They also clearly articulated that there are redeeming elements within religion and culture which they embraced as part of their heritage and value system. They contextually concluded that Christianity has both positive and negative impacts on women's lives. In addition, participants A and B reiterated their commitment to religion and culture and the

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strong need to reform oppressive practices within them. Religion and culture signify a deep sense of identity, belonging and value. Chisale (2017: 19) posits that it is possible for Black women to conform to religion and culture while resisting certain elements in their own way. Chisale (2017: 81) affirms that Christianity can be used to both enforce and resist patriarchy. It was evident that religion and culture provided meaning to the lives of the research participants in ways that are deeply fulfilling and can lead to liberation from socio-economic oppression and subjugation through the questioning and transformation of inherently oppressive factors. While religion, more specifically Christianity and cultures may act as a safe space for the nurturing of patriarchy, women can resist prescribed gender roles by advocating for equality between women and men at all levels of interaction. With reference to Tamale (2004). Chisale (2017: 88) opines that Black women can resist patriarchal norms and practices by advocating for transformation in power relations between men and women. Chisale (2017: 11) notes that cultural and religious practices, left unexamined, continue to affect women negatively, leading to desperation and vulnerability.

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Liberation therefore cannot be achieved by only focusing on individuals and affected groups but rather identification of the structural forces that inhibit women's freedoms and subjugate and oppress them. The constant contradiction between the life affirming and life denying elements of religion and culture was clearly evident by the narratives of the women who identified these elements. For example, participants affirmed the sense of identity and belonging associated with religious and cultural allegiance. Participants also inferred that religion and culture are implicated in the oppression of women, leading to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The dichotomy between life affirming and life denying elements in religion and culture must therefore be examined in the context of the lived realties of women's vulnerabilities.

7.5. Perpetuating and Sustaining Silence: *The practice of survival sex does not seem to be verbalized*

The covert nature of the practice of survival sex in the context of food insecurity and the culture

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of silence that exists was acknowledged and emphasized by the research participants. While silence is a catalyst for continued oppression in many instances, silence regarding the practice of survival sex was construed as a coping strategy in this study. Participants who are also local congregants noted that generally, religious communities are silent about sex and sex work. Participants often alluded to the rarity of discussion on issues related to sex work of any type in Church. When questioned whether there are many stories like Ruth's in communities, participants' in a plenary discussion expressed the following:

> **A:** *We do know about these things happening but we do not talk about it. Talking about it in our communities or family is seen as immoral. Talking about survival sex would probably be the worst thing ever. Also, people are afraid of being judged by society and being labelled all sorts of perverse names when the only thing you are doing is putting food on the table.*

> **B:** *In our community, there are many women who have to make a plan and hustle. The reason why it is not known is because it is a shameful and sad thing to sell your body for food. Even others in the community, they will talk about prostitution and transactional sex but they do not talk about survival sex. It is the community shame because even us, we cannot help that lady with food so she has to sell her body.*

In communities represented in this study, as participants A and B affirmed, people deliberately refrain from any consideration of survival sex as opposed to the way in which they speak of prostitution and transactional sex. Viewed as derogative, terms such as prostitution and transactional sex appear palatable, but survival sex is not. This demonstrated the weight of distress women endure in the face of structural and systemic inequalities that perpetuate survival sex in the face of overwhelming disparity and lack. Participant B's statement is also compelling as it demonstrates the level of depravation and lack in communities since they themselves experience lack of resources and therefore cannot assist others in distress.

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> **C:** *The practice of survival sex does not seem to be verbalized; some can even say that it just happens. It is like an understanding between two people and they just know. It can even happen in a marriage where if the wife needs to get food for the family she has to have sex with the husband. She cannot tell people about such a thing, it is her secret.*

Participant C's assertion on the lack of articulation epitomizes the conspiratorial nature of silence and secrecy around the issue of survival sex. Chisale (2017: 20) in her study on patriarchy and women's resistance, found that silence was a common tool used by women who wished to keep elements of their lives secretive. In order to protect themselves against dominant ideals in society, the use of silence proved to be a critical element in their struggle and provided them with a safe space to preserve their agency. Silence used in this way benefits the oppressed because it is "*unengageable"* and ambiguous, argued Chisale (2017: 77).

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D: *Women in my community are afraid to ask for help, as this will expose the fact that they are struggling. Being poor has a whole stigma with it. We are all not the same. Some people have enough to be able to get some food every day; others struggle and go hungry every day. We all do not struggle the same and it is shameful to let people know that you did not feed your children, or they went to school hungry. That is why women can do survival sex; they do not want others to know they are starving or that they are doing survival sex.*

Participant D suggested that the silence in communities around issues of survival sex serves as a protective mechanism that protects women perceived as more vulnerable in light of the seriousness of their experience. Women view themselves as having the ability and bearing the responsibility to demonstrate care and support one to another. Their silence represents the nurturing and protective persona of women towards other women. This discourse on women's vulnerabilities extends their support instead of succumbing to what Participant E explained as *gossiping* and *being unsupportive*. As Nnaemeka (1995: 107) contends, "African women are

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able to bend the rules to suit their needs, attesting to the elasticity of their cultural boundaries in the face of ambiguities, complexities, paradoxes, give and take, compromise and negotiation." Conventionally, a conspiracy of silence is co-opted by proponents of patriarchy in a quest to further the interests of patriarchal oppression. In this instance, in a perhaps unanticipated and inadvertent way, women in communities where survival sex in the context of food insecurity exists, demonstrate the conspiratorial nature of silence and secrecy in the protection of women who resort to survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

7.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the focus progressed beyond the interpretive strategies of Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality to issues of choice, agency, resistance and abuse inherent in the practice of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. I discussed the nature of socio-economic exclusion of under resourced women from mainstream economy and the systemic perpetuation of structural inequalities. In highlighting how structural inequalities lead to the feminization of poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality, I demonstrated how institutionalized power is a crippling vice to women and can lead to survival sex in contexts where opportunity and access to even the most basic of human needs is limited and even non-existent. Promulgated through economic and political factors as well as religious and cultural affiliations, male hegemony is a key driver in the disenfranchisement of women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality and plays a pivotal role in the practice of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Through a description of the nuances of women's vulnerabilities, I highlighted the gendered nature of poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality and its dire impact on the livelihoods and food security of under resourced women. Lastly, I described how women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality employ silence as a coping strategy to deal with the weight of survival sex in the context of food insecurity at community level, making the issue *unengageable*. The next chapter explores the central role the Christian faith plays in the communities represented in this study. In asking what kinds of theologies are produced when the text of Ruth is brought to bear on the experiences of food insecure women in the Msunduzi municipality, I consider how CBS helps participants theologize in a way that offers hope in the face of overwhelming odds.

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Chapter Eight

8. Broken Bread: A Theological Response to Food Insecurity and Survival Sex

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter I adopt African Women's Theology as a conceptual framework to understand how CBS produces theologies of hope and survival in the face of structural and systemic disparities that lead to food insecurity and survival sex. I analyse the theological themes of sin and survival, justice, redemption and hope. The theological concept of lament is also reflected on and a description of how hope is established in the place of lament is undertaken. As a counter narrative to the general ecclesial discourse of personal morality, I use these themes to discuss how hegemonic ecclesial and societal structures negatively impact the most vulnerable in society. I describe the central role of biblical interpretation in ecclesial and theological understandings of survival sex and the perceptions and experiences of struggle and survival women endure as a result of ecclesial conceptions of survival sex. I discuss the shortcomings of ecclesial interpretations as put forward by the research participants and describe how participants paradoxically interpret survival sex driven by hunger and lack as both a sinful act and a survival strategy. I demonstrate how CBS produces life-affirming theological responses to survival sex by placing emphasis on the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-religious foundations of oppression, thereby addressing the structural nature of women's oppression in the Msunduzi Municipality. In framing the discussion within the context of justice and redemption, I discuss the theological concept of 'God's preferential option for those living on the margins of society' and its implications for redemption and hope for women who turn to survival sex to mitigate food insecurity. Lastly, I describe the hope Christian women find in the prayer of lament that accompanies concomitant action which advocates for meaningful and practical interventions.

8.2. Broken Bodies and Broken Bread

(Byarugaba 2017: 1) argues that the vice of food insecurity is an injustice and should be confronted from a Christian perspective. Byarugaba asserts that the liberating mission of

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Christianity as affirmed in the Eucharist, provides insight into what a theological response to food insecurity should be. Arguing that the Eucharist is the centre of Christianity, Byarugaba maintains that it ought to unite Christians against all forms of injustices particularly food insecurity. Byarugaba (2017: 2) further declares that in a food secure nation such as South Africa, it is atrocious that many South Africans are food insecure, children suffer from malnutrition and women are forced to exchange sex for food as a survival strategy.

In the Msunduzi Municipality, survival sex in the context of food insecurity is about women who sacrificially offer their bodies in situations where there is no other foreseeable way to access food. The title of this chapter, 'broken bread' is not only indicative of the broken and fragmented food system in South Africa (The Post News Paper) but also an indication of the mandate of Christianity to respond to food insecurity as a basic human right. 'Broken bread' relatedly alludes to the term 'breaking bread' which means fellowship over a meal. Since bread is considered a dietary staple around much of the world, 'breaking bread' is considered, in a secular sense, an act of fellowship and sharing of food. In the context of this study, bread is symbolic of the absence of nutrition and nurturance specifically as it relates to food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. Participants in this study affirmed the dire state of food insecurity and acknowledged that they also do not have enough food or means of acquiring food to be of assistance to women who must engage in survival sex to provide food for themselves and their families as is evidenced in participant A's statement below:

> *…It is the community shame because even us, we cannot help that lady with food so she have to sell her body.*

The Christian connotation of breaking bread is synonymous with the Eucharist or Holy Communion. In the context of Christianity, Eucharist means 'thanksgiving'. It is a proclamation of the love of Jesus which was manifested through death and resurrection. The sharing of broken bread and wine at the Eucharist symbolizes not only the body and blood of Christ but also fellowship, supplication, sharing and unity. In sharing the symbols of the Eucharist,

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Christians demonstrate not only a sharing of joys and sorrows but also a commitment to justice and equality inspired by Jesus. Hence, the broken bread shared during the Eucharist is both political and personal. Also known as the Table of the Lord, in a personal sense, it is a symbolic proclamation of the love of Christ for the individual and the world demonstrated through death and resurrection (Byarugaba 2017: 16-17).

Politically, the Eucharist is a directive of Christianity to be mindful of the empty tables in the world that serves as a motivator towards a world that is food sufficient and where women do not have to resort to survival sex to meet a basic need of hunger. In addition, it emphasizes that food insecurity is a social injustice that affects the most vulnerable in society. Religion and culture are the basis of theologizing and theologizing in ways that are truly liberationist necessitates a deep consideration of gender injustices. Such considerations demand ethical engagement that leads to empowerment and transformation of women in relationships impaired by sexism and misogyny (Oduyoye 2003: 1). The lived experience of food insecurity is an important aspect in producing theologies of survival appropriate for the discussion on survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Haddad (2000: 103) maintains that within the context of material deprivation, African women reflect their struggle to survive through their faith. In the context of poverty, argues Haddad (2000: 313) many Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality use their faith as a strategy to cope with poverty and deal with its onslaught upon their bodies.

In this study, I examined the perceptions and theological foundations of Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality as it relates to the exchange of sex for food in a context where under resourced women are immensely marginalized. Singh (2018: 37) notes that African Women's Theology is an appropriate lens for analysing the lived realities of marginalized women. Furthermore, that African women theologians' use of images from the Bible to examine the ecclesial and personal experiences of African women provides a unique perspective of the challenges, setbacks and ingenuity of African women. *In Widowhood and Desperation for Food: Retelling Ruth in the Context of Human Trafficking,* Moyo (2010) affirms that the Christian faith,

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because of its mandate to respond to injustice and oppression, must address systems of oppression of women. The idea that the Church has ignored the experiences of survival of African women is an important talking point for African women theologians. In this study, survival sex in the context of food insecurity was examined through listening to the stories and experiences of African women, their perceptions, struggles and survival strategies in the face of food insecurity. The Church as the household of God is an important consideration for African women theologians. The Church should "be a place that nurtures life to its fullest expression" (Singh 2018: 37). In light of this, in instances of injustice, ecclesial theology must pursue justice and full participation of women in the household of God by producing life sustaining actions and responses (Oduyoye 2001b: 32).

8.3. Theologizing Survival through CBS

Survival sex is a life-denying coping strategy that has a dehumanizing effect on women who sacrificially offer their bodies in order to feed themselves and their families. During the CBS, participants pondered the question, how do we theologically understand the practice of survival sex in in a context where access to sufficient food, the most basic of human rights, is unattainable? It became apparent during the CBS that the general ecclesial interpretation of survival sex is that it is a sinful practice deserving of God's retribution. Participants often declared that survival sex is perceived as such as is evidenced in the following remarks:

> **B**: *I think that Naomi convinced Ruth to do a sinful thing by sleeping with Boaz for food security. The situation was very bad for Naomi to go to the length of causing Ruth to sin like this. But the sin and shame is not for Ruth only, it is also Naomi's sin.*
>
> **C**: *…what Ruth and Naomi did was sinful in the eyes of God.*
>
> **D**: *When reading about sex in the Bible it is usually something of a sinful nature…*

Within the framework of retribution and reward (Dube and Kanyoro 2005: 62), survival sex or sex work of any kind is viewed as sinful and merits God's punishment. The dominant ecclesial

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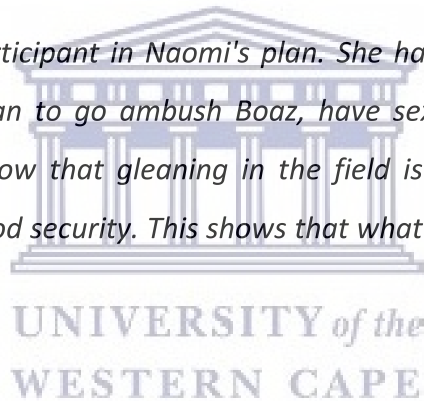
ideology of retribution and reward purports that God inflicts punishment on bad people and rewards good people. So, since survival sex is a sin (as interpreted by local congregations), those who engage in it will suffer the wrath of God. This simplistic interpretation of God's presence and action in the world inhibits an appropriate response to the exchange of sex for survival. African women theologians assert that the theology of retribution and reward is life denying and that a closer listening to alternative voices in biblical texts actually critiques this dominant ideology (Dube and Kanyoro 2005: 62). Participants acknowledged that prior to engaging in CBS, they saw survival sex as a sin rather than a survival strategy, based on enculturation from their various Church traditions. Participant E explained this enculturation in the early stages of the CBS as follows:

> *...Ruth was a willing participant in Naomi's plan. She had the power to refuse but she agreed with Naomi's plan to go ambush Boaz, have sex with him for long-term food security, because we know that gleaning in the field is short term food security, but marriage is long term food security. This shows that what Ruth and Naomi did was sinful in the eyes of God.*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Participants grappled with the paradox of sin and survival based on ecclesial interpretations, often noting that it was actually the act of survival sex that served as a barrier to food security since the action was considered as being against the will of God. Kangwa (2016: 4) observes that the conception of retribution and reward is deeply rooted in religious and cultural values. Resultantly, participants, based on ecclesial enculturation, both individualized and moralized the problem of survival sex. This paradoxical nature of interpretation regarding sin and survival led to participants wrestling with the injustice and dehumanization of survival sex in the context of food insecurity and the anxiety that they too were indulging in sin by entering into the conversation. However, using a biblical text that contains a story of survival sex in the context of food insecurity also spurred participants on to inspect the situation more closely.

The conceptualisation of survival sex as sinful was established as one of the reasons why local

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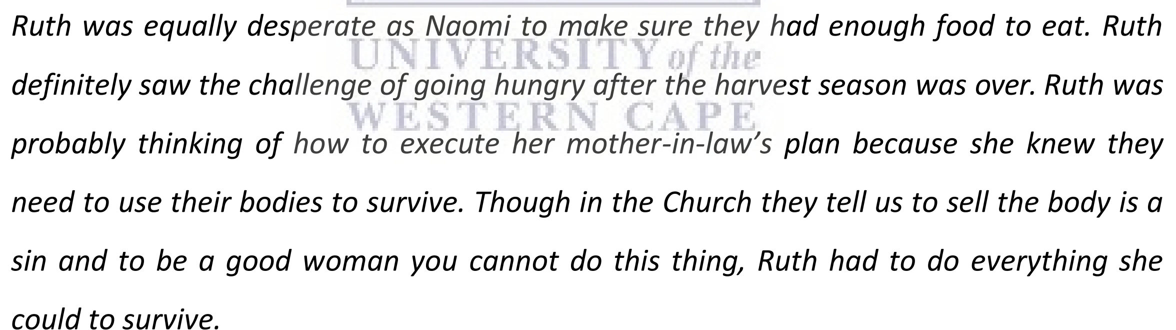
Churches do not make a concerted effort to address the issue. Through the processes of CBS, the structural and systemic inequalities that disadvantage women were foregrounded, leading to an analysis of factors in the Msunduzi Municipality that create environments conducive to survival sex. Singh (2018: 31) maintains that, giving space to the voices of women affected by sex work of any kind, contributes to the ongoing conversation and has the potential "to transcend current categories of meaning-making that have been ascribed through sociological inquires, by discovering new theological categories". In the examination of how Naomi and Ruth in the biblical text recognized that women's bodies can be used as a survival strategy, the research participants began to affirm that socio-economic, political, socio-cultural and socio-religious disadvantage is what leads to women's disempowerment and survival sex. In the patriarchal societies of the biblical text and the Msunduzi Municipality, the participants revealed a clear delineation between honour and shame related to how women's bodies are perceived. In acknowledging the dire predicament food insecurity places women under, participant F observed the following: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> *Ruth was equally desperate as Naomi to make sure they had enough food to eat. Ruth definitely saw the challenge of going hungry after the harvest season was over. Ruth was probably thinking of how to execute her mother-in-law's plan because she knew they need to use their bodies to survive. Though in the Church they tell us to sell the body is a sin and to be a good woman you cannot do this thing, Ruth had to do everything she could to survive.*

The participant brought into sharp focus the contextual realities of food insecurity in the biblical text of Ruth and under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality. Women's experience of domination in the world necessitates a theological response from the perspective of that specific, localized oppression (Coleman 2008: 45). Framed within the cultural, religious and societal disparagement of the notion of trading sex, the biblical reference to survival sex during the CBS gave women permission to talk about it as a survival strategy.

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The humanity of women who engage in sex work as a survival strategy, argues Singh (2018: 116) is being trampled on in contemporary society, as was also observed by participants in this study. The degradation these women face, continued Singh, is the "antithesis" of being treated as an "image-bearer of God". Singh posits that women's interrelatedness to the Godhead as exemplified by Tarus (2014: 7) should shape all social relations. In this sense, a theological view of survival sex in the context of food insecurity should recognize it as a survival strategy that emanates out of a need for subsistence, not a choice made as a result of materialistic greed. The life experiences and struggles of African women is located in "the sources of the impulses that make them seek to enhance life for others" (Oduyoye 2001b:32).

Survival sex in the context of food insecurity cause some women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality to not only struggle for the most basic of human needs for themselves, but also for their children and extended families. Survival sex therefore is a life-impulse that helps these women overcome hunger, even if it is only a temporary measure that comes at great sacrificial cost to their own bodies. For the Christian women represented in this study, CBS provided an avenue for them to make the connection between their faith and the socio-economic, socio-cultural and political oppression of women who resort to survival sex. This in turn inspired dialogue regarding the nature of protections offered to vulnerable women in text and context.

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8.3.1. Dangerous Protections

Ruth's protection within a patriarchal system afforded participants opportunity to confront the cost of financial sufficiency of women. The patriarchal configuration of society, noted participants, creates systems which abuse and exploit women with little or no access and opportunity. This is an inherent part of patriarchal systems (Session 2012: 38). A patriarchal society, argues Session, creates systems in which the vulnerable are susceptible to numerous dangers, as corroborated by participants in the following group discussion:

Group 1:

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The whole of chapter 3 was very shocking to read for some of us… Verse 1 starts off with Naomi saying to Ruth that she needs to be found a husband. Furthermore, it seems that she had already identified Boaz to be a suitable candidate. Naomi also came up with a plan that involves Ruth washing herself, putting on some perfume and getting dressed in her best clothes. Then going to the threshing place and see where Boaz sleeps. We had no idea that Naomi instructed Ruth to go proposition Boaz for sex. But for some of us too, it was not surprising that Naomi looked for a husband for Ruth. It is how religion and culture work. We thought it was normal behaviour as it is Naomi's responsibility as the elder to ensure that Ruth gets remarried. It is the least she could have done after Ruth made sure that they were fed for the entire harvest season. Naomi had the foresight to see that the situation was going to be bad if they did not find a man to take care of them, they would have surely died. Ruth's reply in chapter 3 vs 11 stood out to us. She was willing to do anything and everything her mother-in-law had instructed her. Showing us that she too must have seen the danger of not getting a husband to take care of them. That danger was more than the danger of starvation. Women are always at risk in our societies. Now we see that women are also at risk in the Bible because with patriarchy, they cannot win, they will always be the ones to pay a price. Nothing has really change for women, but it is shocking that it is the same in the Bible.

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It is notable that group 1 identified that without the protection of a man, the situation would be dire for Ruth and Naomi. The statement suggests an agreement about the normalization of gender injustice as a result of male hegemony and its negative effects, particularly on women living on the margins of society. In this context, survival, particularly without a husband, puts women at greater risk of financial instability and food insecurity. Group 1's acknowledgement of the need for a man to maintain financial and food security brings into sharp question the relevance of theological responses to women's oppression at ecclesial level. The responses of the group revealed androcentric and patriarchal ideological peculiarities in ecclesial biblical interpretation that prevent women from resisting oppression and pursuing advancement and growth. The Church therefore is implicated in the feminization of poverty. In naming the

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importance of male protection, the participants highlighted the hierarchical arrangements of gender in ecclesial biblical hermeneutics. Moreover, participants highlighted the complicity of ecclesial biblical interpretation in the oppression of women even in situations where women exchange sex for basic survival.

In questioning Naomi's complicity and active engagement in Ruth's sexual encounter with Boaz on the threshing floor, group 1 not only question the assistance and kindness demonstrated to Ruth but also acknowledge the complicity of Naomi in Ruth's oppression. With the death of Naomi's husband and sons in Ruth 1: 1-5, Naomi's financial security was terminated. In Ruth 3: 1-5, Naomi reveals her plan to ensure financial security for herself and Ruth. Clearly, if Ruth appeals to Boaz sexually, it will ensure the economic stability of both Ruth and Naomi. Group 1's understanding of Naomi's actions is that she was following the customs and traditions of Ancient Israel to ensure her security and lineage as well as Ruth's. This is indicative of the reality of many women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality. Group 1 affirmed that without the patriarchal protections of their male partners, women experience hunger, destitution and suffering to a larger extent. Moreover, that even vulnerable women who occupy positions of authority over other women and girls, have the capacity to exploit and be complicit in the sexual exploitation of women more vulnerable.

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Group 2:

We thought the story of Ruth was about a woman who stayed faithful to God despite facing hardships. But as we continued with contextual Bible study, we identified that it was a story about hunger and sex. We saw that Ruth and Naomi used the lust men have for women to lift themselves out of a very bad situation. These were two women living in a time where they were considered their husbands' property but at the end, they were able to survive. Ruth was praised by the women of Israel Ruth 4v15 saying that she was better than seven sons for her action. But her actions were that she sold her body. We don't understand this because the Bible and the culture in Israel is against this.

Group 2's demonstration of their confusion in confronting the message contained in the text is

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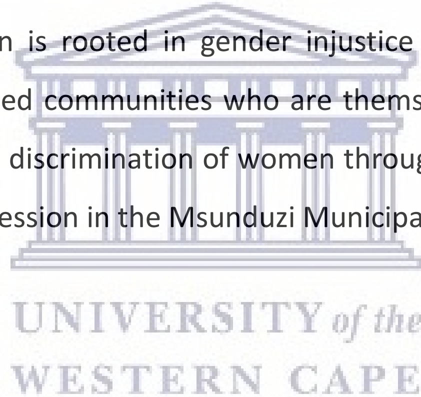
indicative of how ecclesial interpretations facilitate the patriarchal oppression of women. Through CBS, the androcentric nature of interpretation of the text was brought into focus, hence the participants' discomfort at confronting the story of Ruth in a way that revealed the inherent oppression as it relates to the trade of sex for food in a context where opportunities for the development of women and access to necessary resources severely constrain women's growth, development and well-being. Group 2's response is also reminiscent of Kanyoro's (2002: 80) analysis that the dignity of women is often assaulted through biblical interpretation. Patriarchal biblical interpretations therefore fail to share in and alleviate women's suffering and oppression. Moreover, issues of justice and equality for women affected by structural and systemic injustices are not key concepts in ecclesial interpretations (Oduyoye 2001c: 32). Group 2's responses suggest that ecclesial interpretation of the Bible does not adequately address how the exploitation of women is rooted in gender injustice and inequalities. In situations where men from under resourced communities who are themselves economically vulnerable, take advantage of the structural discrimination of women through exchanging food for sex, the gendered nature of female oppression in the Msunduzi Municipality is highlighted.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Group 3:

The Book of Ruth tells us a story of two widowed women who used sex as a means of survival. Ruth's situation is like that of so many young girls and women in this age of blesser and blessees. At first, it may start out as women desperate for food, but after that need is satisfied, they move on to using men for other things such as lifestyles and education while men use them for sex. We think that Boaz is the blesser because at the beginning of the chapter he notices Ruth first and is taken by her character. Ruth also replies like a damsel saved from distress and he instructs none of his men to touch her. Ruth is the blessee as she is the recipient of grains and protection given abundantly by Boaz. She even calls him her redeemer, maybe implying that Boaz has saved her from widowhood. For us it seems that Boaz made the first move on Ruth that allowed Naomi to see it fit that she instructs her daughter-in-law to make herself as attractive as possible, to seek out Boaz after his dinner and to "uncover his feet and lie down." We

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know now from the feedback, to "uncover the feet," some have said it is sexual relations… She also took a risk by giving up the only asset she had (her body) in order to provide long-term food and financial security for herself and her mother-in-law. It just shows us how tough it is for women. To sell the body is a big thing but she did it to survive. We wonder if Ruth loved Boaz, but we are not sure, sometimes desperation can look like love.

Corroborating group 2's observations, group 3 acknowledged how ecclesial interpretations promote hegemonic masculinities, where men are heads of households, the Church and the economy, and wield financial power over women, using it to exploit and denigrate. Significantly, Group 3 likened Boaz to a Blesser and Ruth to Blessee in their own contexts. West and Haddad (2016: 152) also question Boaz's engagement with Ruth in the harvest fields. Identifying Boaz as a prominent and wealthy man, West and Haddad maintain that it was Boaz's initiative that identified Ruth as belonging not to another man, but to a woman (Naomi), making Ruth particularly exploitable. Furthermore, Boaz offered Ruth resources and asked her to stay within his field. West and Haddad ask, "[w]as Boaz… advertising himself as a potential sugar daddy?" Their engagement with the text is indicative of life-giving biblical interpretations that is cognisant of the social realities of women who must navigate life within economic, social, political and cultural constraints. With reference to Leclerc-Madlala (2008), West and Haddad (2016: 145) suggest that in both rural and urban areas in South Africa, older men are known to provide resources to young women in need. As a result of cultural norms, young women are expected to be obedient, dutiful and respectful to older men, making young women especially vulnerable to coercive attempts by older men to sexually exploit them (West and Haddad 2016: 147).

Through CBS women were able to substantiate West and Haddad's findings and to eliminate patriarchal interpretations inherent in ecclesial readings of the Book of Ruth. In so doing, the group put forward life-affirming interpretations of their own, and contextually address survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The group also highlighted how patriarchal oppression

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creates environments for the feminization of poverty and the commodification of women's bodies. CBS challenged the group to analyse and criticize socio-cultural, socio-political, socio-economic and socio-religious underpinnings that marginalize and exploit women. Group 3 therefore demonstrated that ecclesial interpretations do not adequately grapple with the widespread impact of gender injustice and its assault on women's bodies. Moreover, the group demonstrated that survival theologies put forward through ecclesial interpretations are defunct in that it does address the structural and systemic nature of women's oppression. This is saliently captured in the group's observation that CBS enabled the examination of women's oppression from the perspective of the intersecting vulnerabilities promulgated by systemic inequalities and gender injustice and endorsed by ecclesial interpretation of the Bible.

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Group 4:

From Ruth's unquestionable faithfulness to Naomi there was no indication in the story that she said 'no' or hesitated. It was Naomi's willingness and calculating nature that was very scandalous. Naomi gave Ruth step by step instructions on how to get into bed with Boaz. She must have known that the situation was about to change for the worst if they do not act. Maybe something similar happened to Naomi that is why it is so normal for her to do it to Ruth. They say we always repeat the cycle of abuse. In our culture, it is frowned upon for a woman to remarry someone who is not a close relative after the husband's death… Although Ruth was facing the uncertainty of poverty and hunger, she took the initiative to go and glean in fields of the people of Jerusalem who looked down on her. That takes a lot of strength and courage. For us, we think that people who do survival sex are to be respected because they can give their souls for their families. For the entire harvest season, she was able to glean in Boaz field which ensured their survival. It was very unexpected that Naomi would suggest that she beautify herself, seek out Boaz's sleeping place, wait for him to eat and drink. Then present herself to Boaz… In our society it is still taboo for women to do as Ruth did. Men do not take women who do this seriously. So even when they are giving everything for their family or to stop hunger, men will not want to marry them after the reputation, only use them

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because to marry they must get a dignified woman. It is seen undignified because a woman must be restrained and coy, unlike Ruth who made the move that leads to sex. Another thing that stood out to us the most is that the in the Bible there would be sex exchanged for food and security. When reading about sex in the Bible it is usually something of a sinful nature such as the story of Eve, Delilah and Tamar. Women are described as loose, deceitful and wicked yet in Ruth's story she is praised by the people of Israel 'She is better than seven sons'… And the fact that someone older than Ruth was the mastermind behind Boaz and Ruth coming together was something I found very scandalous. Ummama [mothers] in the community are not supposed to do that but we know it happens sometimes. So even when the system helps women it is not in a good way because they are still being used.

Group 4 captured how hegemonic masculinities maintain the cycle of abuse, rendering women socio-economically, socio-culturally and politically powerless. In speculating that Naomi was perhaps a victim of abuse herself, the group noted how the cycle of abuse is perpetuated. Batchelor (2013: xv) affirms that the cycle of abuse sets off a chain-reaction with damaging consequences for multiple victims – first to the victim herself, then to all those she has a social relationship with. The group's shock and outrage that Naomi groomed Ruth for a sexual encounter with Boaz is indicative of their strong sense of sinfulness of sex outside of marriage and the sexual exchange of women's bodies. The idea of the sinfulness of women who engage in survival sex in the context of food insecurity created tension amongst the participants in group 4 as they grappled with what some in the group deemed to be illicit sex and others termed as a survival strategy.

Within the discussion in group 4, participant A noted that women should not engage in any type of sex outside of marriage because that is what Christianity dictates. Participant B noted that if the Church was more supportive of woman and dealt with the levels of poverty women in the community face, they would not need to resort to *the sin of survival sex*. Singh (2018: 174) affirms that the ecclesial description of sin related to survival sex is synonymous with an Augustinian conception of iniquity as essentially prideful. The manifestation of an Augustinian

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conception of sin, continues Singh, is seen in extreme self-love and sensuality which manifests itself in physical gratification, usually of a sexual nature. The antidote for the sin-as-pride model, argues Singh, is self-sacrifice. Drawing on Acolaste (2001: 130), Singh maintains that the "sin-as-pride model" of framing sinfulness is found wanting in the description of African women who embody "self-sacrifice", not "self-love" in the sacrificial offering of their bodies in exchange for food and basic subsistence needs. In framing survival sex as self-sacrifice and sacrificial agential action in the context of extreme vulnerability and limited options, survival sex in the context of food insecurity cannot be conceptualized as sin. It is a self-sacrificial survival strategy.

In framing the theological discussion of survival sex as a self-sacrificial survival strategy, the inherent oppression in patriarchal ecclesial interpretations became apparent to participants. As a result, participants became emboldened to more closely analyse how structural disparities and ecclesial biblical interpretations create oppressive environments for women and facilitates the commodification of women's bodies and sex for survival. Male hegemony together with the lack of employment and opportunity for growth, decent housing, sanitation and other essential infrastructural needs in the Msunduzi Municipality were acknowledged as issues that create poverty and vulnerability, particularly amongst women and drives the trade of sex for food.

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Ming (2016: 42) attests that the ecclesial idealization of biblical texts obscure embedded patriarchal impulses. Ming continues that "Church" interpretations restrict "explanatory application mainly to personal morality and evangelism" making the Bible basically irrelevant to larger society. This is evident in group 4's observation that when reading about sex in the Bible it is usually about the sinfulness of women, group 3's observation that Boaz is Ruth's saviour and in group 1 and 2's initial romanticized notion of what the story of Ruth is about. Both Sugirtharajah (2012) and Ming (2016: 72) affirm that readers in ecclesial contexts tend to idealize oppressive biblical texts and the patriarchal world that produced those texts. This is indicative of the ambiguous and contested nature of biblical interpretation.

All four groups demonstrated an initial idealization of biblical texts and only began to see how

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oppressive their interpretations were to women as they began to read the text using the tools of CBS. Clearly from the narratives of the groups it became evident that through CBS, they examined the tensions inherent in the biblical text as it implicates itself in the context of women's oppression. CBS stimulated a pertinent question of whether the assistance and kindness demonstrated to Ruth is truly liberating and in her best interest. This is evident in group 1's observation that women are not able to survive without the assistance of men, group 2's observation that women are considered the property of men, group 3's statement that Boaz is actually Ruth's blesser, implying exploitation and group 4's questioning of the disenfranchisement of women even within social systems designed to offer them support.

The maintenance of ecclesial patriarchy is as a direct result of patriarchal interpretations of biblical texts (Masenya 1998, 2001, Oduyoye 2001a, Moyo 2009, Hinga 2002) and serves to cement societal patriarchy and women's oppression, leading to risky survival strategies inclusive of survival sex. The participants noted that protections offered to women within patriarchal contexts expend and commodify women's bodies, rendering those protections dangerous to women's well-being and safety. Such protections devalue women and negatively affect their socio-economic status. This ultimately negatively impacts women's dignity and self-esteem and has implications for perceptions of their own self-worth. In the context of this study, the offer of food in exchange for sex in an environment where those who have access to food have power over those who don't, is indicative of how hegemonic societal arrangements disempower the most vulnerable amongst the vulnerable. CBS uncovered the pervasiveness of women's oppression not evident in patriarchal conceptions and analysis of the Book of Ruth. This point is affirmed by group 2's remark that initially, they perceived the Book of Ruth to be about remaining faithful to God in the midst of suffering. Remaining faithful to God implied not engaging in what the group perceived as sinful actions, i.e., survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The implication of this in the story of Ruth as understood by participants is that God will reward your faithfulness as long as you do not commit sin. This is further evidence of participants' initial understanding of God's involvement with humanity as a relationship of retribution and reward.

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Gabaitse (2012: 4-5) maintains that patriarchal ideologies are promulgated and maintained because it is 'Christianized' as religious ideology. This gives it impetus to exert coercive power and control over women. The patriarchal ideology of male hegemony is a key driver of survival sex in a context where all are vulnerable, yet women are still disproportionately negatively affected by structural injustice. Participants acknowledged that interpreting scripture through the lens of patriarchy produces elucidations that further entrench women's oppression. Furthermore, a deliberate exploration of hegemonic oppression inherent in biblical texts and social systems and structures produces theologies of survival. This point was further elucidated by participant C:

> *The Church must teach about the dangers associated to not developing yourself to be fully self-sufficient. Also, as parents, we must change the way we raise our girls. The narrative is always you must behave yourself, not be promiscuous, so a man will want to take care of you. Or else they will continue with this mentally of needing a man and be easily influenced into participating in sex because they only have the use of their bodies for survival. We can help the community to understand how important* [it is] *to educate girls and help them develop not teach them to rely on the man.*

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Within hegemonic domination, men exchange food for sex and women exchange sex for food. This is an indication that even within vulnerable communities where access to education and opportunity disenfranchises everyone, men still have the economic upper-hand and women are the most vulnerable. Dube (2016: 2) confirms this assertion and maintains that a theological response to such gendered oppression should acknowledge that patriarchy created men's entitlement to power. The cultural and ecclesial complicity to such entitlement together with the cultural and ecclesial values of dominance which resulted from patriarchal oppression of women is challenged through the CBS process. In addition, an ethical responsibility for the creation of equitable gender relations are advocated for.

Participant C's assertion about the development of young girls and women is reflective of the need for reform of gender stereotyping. The responsibility for this, explained participant C, lies

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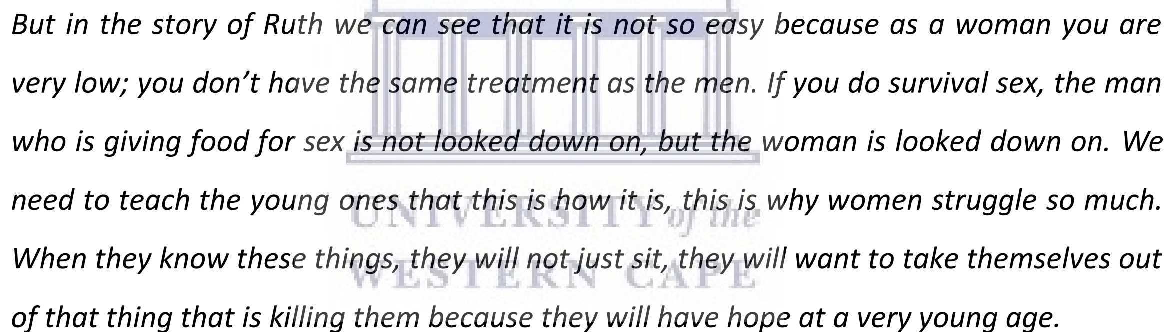
on the shoulders of parents and institutions such as the Church because of the material spaces they occupy in the lives of young women and girls. Strikingly, the level of empowerment put forward by the participant for women and young girls is unrealistic because of the hegemonic configurations of society and the patriarchal configuration of ecclesial practices. Calling for an empirical, contextual and communal approach to doing theology, Phiri and Nadar (2006) and Adonis (2017) acknowledge that theological engagement must holistically confront systems and ideologies that negatively impact the lives of African women and directly address community contextual concerns. This approach to doing theology argues Phiri (2004: 15), will take into consideration the host of systemic issues that contribute to the vulnerabilities women face and the impact of those vulnerabilities on the bodies of women. This point is succinctly highlighted in participant D's observation below: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> *But in the story of Ruth we can see that it is not so easy because as a woman you are very low; you don't have the same treatment as the men. If you do survival sex, the man who is giving food for sex is not looked down on, but the woman is looked down on. We need to teach the young ones that this is how it is, this is why women struggle so much. When they know these things, they will not just sit, they will want to take themselves out of that thing that is killing them because they will have hope at a very young age.*

Participant D emphasized the pervasiveness of gender stratification and the hegemonic configuration of ecclesial and community life. The participant confirmed that, experientially, gender stratification embeds women's oppression. Furthermore, participant D saliently communicated that male involvement in exchanging food for sex is overlooked while women's involvement in exchanging sex for food is condemned. In acknowledging the negative stereotyping of women engaged in survival sex, participant D emphasised the association of women's sinfulness and male privilege within a hegemonic society. This is also indicative of the perception of women who engage in survival sex as immoral and seductive temptresses bent on seducing men. This acknowledgement affirms that it is societal, religious and cultural norms and standards that negatively stereotype women, casting their survival strategy as sin and absolving men. Okure (2000: 194) maintains that the task of theology is to promote life. Biblical texts

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should promote better living conditions for all those who struggle under the weight of oppression. The task of survival theologies should be to expose oppressive biblical interpretations and produce interpretations that describe the situational suffering hegemonic conceptions of Church and society inflict on vulnerable women. Evident in participant D's response is the yearning for theological engagement that offers a message of hope rather than condemnation of women navigating life on the margins of society.

8.4. Theologizing Hope through CBS

Participants expressed a yearning for God to hear their cry for justice and redemption from structural and systemic inequalities that lead to survival sex, disparity and lack. Oduyoye (2004: 45) observes that redemption in the African experience by turning to God, acknowledges "the perversions of human nature that make it possible for some to prey on others and for individuals to trample upon the humanity of others." Justice is an important theological aspect when dealing with the theological category of redemption. Rooted in Black Liberation Theology, the notion of justice is the idea of God's preferential option for the poor. A preferential option for the poor is built on the idea that poverty and inhumanity are contrary to the will of God (Gutierrez 1987: 94). Liberation Theology that does not take gender justice into consideration in its theologizing, is incomplete, argues Dube and Kanyoro (2005: 183). Participant E's remark regarding gender injustice reflects the ecclesial and societal gender power imbalances that contribute to the injustice of women's extreme vulnerability in the text of Ruth and in the Msunduzi Municipality:

> *The story of Ruth makes me think about the government and the Church who are supposed to help all people to be food secure. But the way they favour the men, it makes sense to me now that women suffer from food insecurity in my community. Women are made very low and men rule over women in the Church and in the community. The men have power and the women do not have power without men.*

Participant F expressed that:

> *The men buying survival sex are also the problem. They see the despair and poverty that*

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these women go through, but they just use the women for sex. Just like at the end of chapter 4, Ruth was not mentioned in the bloodline yet without her womb there would be no David or Jesus. I feel that in our communities' men feel like they have this power that comes from buying a woman. They become predators and women's bodies become like meat.

Participants affirmed that the unfair treatment of women, hegemonic abuses of power and corruption disenfranchise women. This strong sense of injustice and the need for justice was a common theme throughout the CBS. Participants noted that it is ecclesial and societal injustices that lead to women and girls being vulnerable to risky survival strategies in order to cope with food insecurity. Formson and Hilhorst (2016: 12) assert that there is a close link between economic and sexual exploitation. Moreover, that in instances of extreme vulnerability to food insecurity, the adoption of the coping mechanism of survival sex is a common occurrence. Participants also expressed hope that God will deliver them from injustice and oppression that results in risky survival strategies inclusive of survival sex, in order to mitigate food insecurity:

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G: *Eish, all we can do is pray! There's nothing else. Who is going to help our women in the community who have to give their bodies for food? It breaks my heart when I think of Ruth and all the women in our communities who go through this.*

H: *Some of us were talking about it when we were going home. We said it is hopeless, but we also spoke about the power of prayer, that one gives us some hope, at least! We said we will continue to pray for the women in our communities all over Pietermaritzburg. We will pray and pray and cry out to God to help us.*

Participants G and H affirmed that in situations of hopelessness regarding structural and systemic injustice that leads to food insecurity, limited or no access to employment, amenities and basic needs necessary for a healthy and balanced life, prayer signifies hope in God. The act

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of prayer also signifies hope for women who are forced to sacrificially offer their bodies in exchange for food. In instances where feelings of disillusionment arise as a result of injustice, the participants expressed their pain and angst through the language of lamentation in the face of death-dealing suffering (Njoroge 2005: 465).

For African women theologians, biblical interpretation must pursue justice and equality for women. Redemption is seen as God's involvement with the world aimed at liberating humanity from all forms of oppression (Tarus 2014: 5). Issues of injustice which leads to survival sex and food insecurity is understood within the paradigm of a need for justice. Justice is a necessary component as redemption and hope is imagined. Redemption that offers hope for women vulnerable to survival sex in the context of food insecurity is understood from the perspective of patriarchal captivity that undermines the liberating work of Christ in the world which leads to freedom from all forms of oppression (Tarus 2014: 17). The work of the Church must be practical and pragmatic, producing life-sustaining actions. This places the redemptive work of the Church in solidarity with women who suffer as a result of structural and systemic oppression. This is also affirmed by Oduyoye (1996: 499) who states that the redemptive work of the Church which offers hope to the vulnerable, is to engage practically in the elimination of dehumanization in societies.

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In arrogating the situation of Ruth and Naomi, their abject poverty and the extreme measure of Ruth resorting to survival sex in the context of food insecurity, participants recalled women in their communities with similar stories and expressed hope in God for redemption even in situations where their local congregations stigmatize and marginalize them:

> I: *I know of a family in XXX where I stay. The family really suffers. They don't have electricity and the municipality even disconnected their water. There is only drops of water coming out of the tap. No one works but the lady has four daughters… She sends her daughters to have sex with men for food. It is so sad, we see it so often... Different men in fancy cars will come and pick them up and when they come back, they will have*

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packets and packets of groceries. It happens a few times in the month. We always pray for that family. I know the young women in that house do not like doing that to get food, but they have to do it. One of them also attends Church but she is judged by some people. The aunties in Church even call her a 'fast thing' and tell their sons to stay away from her!

Participant I's comment reflects the challenges women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality experience. Many participants continually corroborated that women are often not able to pay municipal and other bills, let alone buy food. Limited access to amenities and resources, expressed participant J, *is a normal part of life*. Clearly, access to food incurs another cost to women's bodies. Abrahams (2017: 19) affirms that low income households in the Msunduzi Municipality are expected to live on their meagre incomes. Women often prioritize expenditure on what is non-negotiable. They ensure that bills such as scholar transport and school fees are paid first. This often results in the budget for food being extremely low and insufficient for consumption for the month. Structural and systemic injustices that lead to poverty and food insecurity therefore is an everyday experience for women to the extent that women have internalized this level of oppression as an acceptable part of the struggles of life.

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Participant I's remark about other women in the local congregation referring to the young woman as a "*fast thing*" is indicative of community and congregational condemnation and judgement of women who resort to survival sex in order to mitigate starvation and hunger. Within a certain ethnicity in the Msunduzi Municipality, a 'fast thing' is a derogatory term used to indicate a promiscuous girl/woman. The reference to the young woman in such a disrespectful manner is indicative not only of societal stereotyping but also of the levels of vulnerability of women. Moreover, it is telling that a mother is implicated in the sexual exploitation of her daughters and highlights the magnitude of oppression. As the most diminished voices, young women from under resourced areas are endangered firstly by systemic injustices and secondly, by the very people intended to be their protectors and whom

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they often trust wholeheartedly. Another significant aspect participant I raised is the manner in which the young woman is derided in Church. The general patriarchal conception of women as either chaste and morally upright or immoral sinners is a barrier preventing women from seeking support and assistance from their local congregations.

Oduyoye (2004: 99) orates that the task of the Church should be liberation. Therefore, the role of the Church must be men and women mutually supporting each other as they live out and practice their Christian faith. In naming the scorn with which some women in the congregation view the young woman, the participant eluded that her local congregation is not a representation of hope for women who sacrificially offer their bodies in exchange for food. Palm (2012: 99) declares that the Christian practice of hope must meet the needs of human welfare. Demonstrating such connection, the Church must become a community of hope for the vulnerable (Palm 2012: 101). For the women living within the harsh realities of food insecurity, the notion of sinfulness offers little hope for acceptance and support in their day to day struggles against hunger. It is this strong sense of sinfulness that has implications for lack of value ascribed to women who resort to survival sex. Moreover, it is indicative of the Old Testament perspective of sexual purity which renders women who engage in sex work, as unclean and in violation of prescribed rules of sexual conduct (Stone 2015: 181). The local Church and congregants, in disparaging the young women, demonstrate how oppressive ecclesial interpretation of biblical texts are to women and the inability of the Church and society to offer hope in situations where women turn to survival sex as a conceivable option to deal with the problem of hunger and lack.

Significantly, towards the end of the entire CBS programme, participants demonstrated that where the situation appears hopeless, Christian women find hope in prayer. The deep-seated angst as a result of injustices that result in food insecurity and survival sex stimulated a call to prayer amongst the participants. Resultantly, we engaged in prayer for an entire afternoon during the CBS programme. This type of prayer is a form of purposeful mourning before God that signals that the situation is agonizing and intolerable and reminds God of God's partnership

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with those who suffer and the need for God to act decisively (Ackermann 2003: 3). In prayerfully addressing the issue of survival sex and food insecurity, where women are robbed of access, opportunity and life without struggle, the ancient language of lament was adopted. This is a way of naming the many perils associated with food insecurity and crying out to God in the face of unspeakable and unbearable circumstances (Ackermann 2003: 4). African women theologians refer to this type of groaning before God as a theology of lament.

For the research participants, lamenting represented a wrestling with God in the face of life-threatening and life destroying food insecurity. Participants' purposed that their acts of prayer will accompany concomitant action that advocates for meaningful interventions (Njoroge 1997:2). Participants acknowledged their own limited access to employment,[47] amenities and food yet purposed to make a more meaningful effort to create awareness, educate women in the community and enlist the assistance of NGO's such as PACSA[48] and other organizations in an effort to address the problem of food insecurity. Moreover, participants undertook to more comprehensively investigate the scourge of survival sex in their local communities and make efforts to offer more deliberate and meaningful support. Participants also acknowledged that there is a strong need for a variety of actions from all sectors of society in dealing with the issue of survival sex and food insecurity. For the participants, this call was accompanied by a theology of lament which offered a language that has the capacity to express the feeling of helplessness and suffering and the opportunity to imagine possible solutions and interventions. A theology of lament "is both individual and communal," - beseeching God to act in the face of human suffering (Ackermann 2003: 4). For the research participants, the limited options and resources they have, to address the problem of survival sex and the related problems associated with it, evoked painful emotions. In this dire situation, through prayer, a theology of lament that sought a response to the brokenness and pain they witness and the complexity of human

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[47] This is also reflected in Statistics South Africa. 2016a and b.

[48] In Chapter four of this thesis, I mentioned that PACSA officially closed in 2021. For the research participants and the women represented in this study, this signified another devastating setback. PACSA provided support for sex workers, the homeless and women living on the margins of society. Sadly, the closure of PACSA leaves communities that benefited from its work without social support in many instances.

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existence, brought hope to a hopeless situation.

Lamenting individually and communally signified standing in solidarity with women who are exploited through the exchange of sex for food in a context where alternative options are often not available. A prayer of lament is both a signifier of hope and acknowledgment of the complexity of the situation. In the place of lament, the participants expressed that while answers and solutions are not accessible in the moment, the struggle for justice must continue. Concomitant to practical efforts and resources available, hope was ignited in the beseeching prayer of lament, where groaning too intense to articulate became a lamentation to God to hear their cry. In that action, hope was established. It was through the prayer of lament that participants were able to give a voice to many of their concern and find hope and a way forward in addressing the devastating and contextual issue of survival sex and food insecurity (Njoroge 1997, 2008, 2009). In the place of lament, participants acknowledged that from the perspective of their faith, redemption from survival sex in the context of food insecurity requires pragmatic interventions. Coleman (2008: 45) too expressed that for theology to be relevant, ecclesial and theological responses must be rooted in the needs of the community, particularly women and relevant for the specific society in which it occurs.

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For theology in Africa to be relevant, argues Kanyoro (2001: 40), it must be grounded in the problems and celebrations of all people on the African continent. Oduyoye (2001a: 73) further explains that while typically, African women's bodies have been associated with sin and inferiority, the strength of African women and their resistance to evil and death as well as their suffering, sacrifice and spirituality must serve as a reminder of the nature of God. Theological and ecclesial engagement therefore must contribute life affirming responses to survival sex in the context of food insecurity as it affects women's bodies and wellbeing.

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8.5. Conclusion

The chapter commenced with a brief elucidation of the conceptual framework of African Women's Theology and the themes of sin and survival, redemption, hope and lament. I described the way in which the themes are used in a liberationist discussion of how CBS produces theologies of survival and hope. This was followed by an exposition of the liberating mission of Christianity as affirmed in the Eucharist to ensure food security for all people. I described how the act of breaking bread at the Eucharist is both political and personal in that it serves as a proclamation of the love of Christ for all people. Moreover, that the Eucharist is a directive of Christianity to work towards a world that is food sufficient. I discussed my use of the term 'broken bread' to indicate the broken food system in South Africa that results in 'broken bodies' where women sacrificially offer their bodies in exchange for food.

Framed within a discourse on sin and survival, I discussed how CBS produced theologies of survival. It was established that the ecclesial interpretations of the Book of Ruth served as a barrier to food insecurity for women from under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality. Through CBS, it was determined that participants paradoxically interpret survival sex as both a sinful act and as a survival strategy. CBS therefore gave participants permission to talk about survival sex in the context of food insecurity as a survival strategy rather than a sinful act. In so doing, participants were able to interpret survival sex in the biblical text and in their own contexts as being shaped by socio-economic, socio-cultural, socio-religious and political factors. I demonstrated that as an ethical mode of engagement, ecclesial and theological biblical interpretations regarding survival sex must be actively involved in the transformation of hegemonic social and ecclesial systems and structures. This would effectively address women's disenfranchisement and disempowerment in both Church and society. I demonstrated that the ecclesial idealization of biblical texts such as the Book of Ruth obscures inherent patriarchal oppression, thus perpetuating the exploitation of women, leading to women's sustained poverty and desperation for survival. Moreover, ecclesial and societal gender power imbalances is directly implicated in the injustice of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. I argued that theologies of hope must take seriously the idea that poverty and food insecurity is contrary

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to the will of God. Such theologies incorporate advocating for justice from structural and systemic oppression that cements poverty amongst women. I described how justice regarding women's oppression is an important category for women's emancipation and redemption. Lastly, I described how the ancient language of lament was used by participants to cry out to God for intervention in an intolerable situation. This purposeful language of lament gave participants a platform to name the many perils associated with survival sex in the context of food insecurity and beseech God to act on their behalf. I demonstrated how, through the prayer of lament, participants also acknowledged the need for concomitant social and ecclesial actions to address the issue of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in a practical and pragmatic way.

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Chapter Nine

9. Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

In this study, I explored how CBS contributes to the understanding of the factors that drive survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality as informed by the voices of selected Christian women. The research was guided by three key research questions: 'how does CBS support and inspire a liberationist and empowering analysis of the survival strategies of women in the text of Ruth and in the context of food insecure women in the Msunduzi Municipality?', 'what are the survival strategies, experiences and motivations of food insecure women in under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality?' and 'What kinds of theologies are produced when the text of Ruth is brought to bear on the experiences of food insecure women in the Msunduzi municipality?'

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In this final chapter I discuss three key contributions to knowledge that my thesis makes. The discussion will focus on an assessment of the expediency of CBS in harnessing community knowledge and how CBS fosters a more nuanced understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Hegemonic domination as a catalyst for the exchange of sex for food within a survivalist space and contextual theological incongruities in the analysis and understanding of survival sex is problematized. To facilitate the discussion, I will focus the dialogue around three main categories, namely, CBS as an unconventional methodological approach, the intersectionality of the feminization of poverty and new theological categories in the discourse on survival sex and food insecurity. I conclude this thesis by presenting some of the limitations of the study and areas for further research.

9.2. CBS as an Unconventional Methodological Approach

Methodologically, the study contributes to an understanding of how CBS as a religious resource offers new insights about survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Generally, studies relating to sex work do not include religious resources as mechanisms to better understand the

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phenomenon. This study highlights that employing an unconventional methodology, coupled with an unconventional group of research participants, has the capacity to yield additional insight into the phenomenon of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The study demonstrates how, as a methodological approach, CBS centres the voices and experiences of women in a quest to understand social justice as a task of the Church, society, the researcher, and the research participants. CBS exemplified that social, economic, cultural and religious justice for women is dependent on the recognition of women's subjugated positioning within patriarchal societies. Moreover, that to reproduce such patriarchal constructions through biblical interpretation serves only to entrench women's vulnerabilities and subjugation.

One of the objectives of this study was to provide a contextual understanding of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. It was evident that the safe engaging spaces during the CBS sessions afforded interrogation of how biblical interpretation implicates itself in the structures of gender inequality and the reality of survival sex. CBS, framed by reader-response theory, exposed oppressive biblical interpretations related to the strategies, experiences and motivations for survival sex. It was established that ecclesial interpretation of the Book of Ruth generally romanticizes Ruth in the biblical text. She is characterized as a chaste and submissive woman who is obedient to Naomi and Boaz (Anderson 2007:1). Consequently, as a result of her obedience and submissiveness to authority and male headship, Ruth is vindicated from food insecurity and poverty through marriage to the wealthy Boaz. With over 80% of the South African population being Christian (International Religious Freedom Report 2018) and biblical interpretation being a major factor in how women are taught to interpret their social status, confronting and displacing stereotypical gender constructs that subjugate women is an essential component of liberation. This study demonstrated CBS's capacity to address how the dominant reproduce hegemonic ways of thinking and producing knowledge thereby enforcing the various forms of women oppression.

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Through the lens of reader-response theory, the initial relationship between the text and participants was established. Participants from their religious experience with the text and their

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identities engaged with the interpretative process (Ford 2015: 83). Participants revealed that generally, they are not cognizant of ideological oppression as it relates to biblical interpretation and their lived realities. Clearly, their interpretive communities or Church traditions influenced their initial understanding and interpretation of the text. CBS exposed the patriarchal domination of women and male hegemony in ecclesial interpretation. Participants were thus able to recognize that survival sex and food insecurity cannot exist outside of a patriarchal society and that hegemonic biblical interpretation is directly implicated in the practice of survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

The study emphasized that ecclesial interpretations actually facilitate and sustain the oppression of women by enforcing that men are superior and that women should embrace stereotypical roles in servitude to men. The deliberate focus on critical questions of the text exposed female submission and obedience and male headship and authority. The proclivity of CBS, which centralises the reader's interpretation, amplified participants' interpretive lenses on how pervasive patriarchal oppression is. Through CBS, the participants' imagination was engaged as they received, processed and ordered information that led to liberating moments where the text became directly about survival sex in the context of food insecurity as it related to participants' context and lived reality. The process allowed participants to recognize that they had internalized gender inequality and patriarchal norms and standards to the extent that they adopted a false consciousness that enabled the disassociation of survival sex as a survival strategy in a context of ideological oppression.

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Through the liberationist readings of CBS, participants who generally read through the patriarchal lenses of their Church traditions, now read through the lens of liberation from patriarchal oppression. Resultantly, CBS exposed specifically the promotion of female domination and male hegemony in ecclesial interpretations. In exploring the possibility that Ruth used her body as a coping strategy to mitigate food insecurity, participants began to relate Ruth's experience of inequality, marginalization, ostracism and entrenched poverty to their own communities. They realized that patriarchal interpretations of biblical texts actually serve

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to exclude women from being active, independent participants in all aspects of social life, including the economy, thereby directly contributing to the feminization of poverty and survival sex. They engaged in intensive discussions on food insecurity within their communities and acknowledged the fertile space for survival sex. This finding confirmed Wood's (2019: 2) analysis that the Church's failure to empower women socially and economically, amounts to modern day slavery as it fails to uphold women's equal rights. Furthermore, through its failure to conscientize women of the realities of oppression, the Church is directly implicated in male hegemony and women's vulnerability to food insecurity and survival sex.

The Church implicates itself in the ideological oppression of women through the maintenance, perpetuation and reinforcement of male hegemony and the lack of teaching and conscientzation of the pervasiveness of patriarchal oppression. This study, through its emphasis on the oppressiveness of ecclesial interpretation, exposed how such interpretations facilitate the creation of conditions conducive for the exchange of sex for food as ideological oppression intersects with every aspect of the lives of food insecure women. CBS empowered participants by developing their own ability to interpret the text from the perspective of their own community experience rather than from the perspective of male hegemonic oppression and female subservience. This point is further clarified in Castelein's (2000: 160) observation that interpretation is never innocent - various forces such as power, ideology and the social construction of knowledge influence the nature of interpretation. Moreover, the CBS process emphasized how a critical reading that is inclusive of interrogation afforded an empowering perspective for the participants as they were engaged deeply in critique. They redefined survival sex that they witnessed in their communities' while being cognizant of the intersecting realities of women's positionality in society. CBS therefore allowed for an analysis that goes beyond ecclesial biblical interpretation to include the array of ideological vices that contribute to women's subservient positioning in society and the processes and structures that oppress and exploit women.

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9.3. The Intersectionality of the Feminization of Poverty and Survival Sex in the Context of Food Insecurity

The study contributes deeper insight into the intersectionality of the feminization of poverty and survival sex in the context of food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality. The study revealed that the feminization of poverty in the Msunduzi Municipality is as a result of ideological, structural and systemic constraints peculiar to women. Participants revealed that the intersecting nature of the maintenance of hegemonic domination in mainstream economy exists contextually in their communities through race, class and gender injustices. They became acutely cognizant of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty (Statistics South Africa 2008: 2, Owusu-Afriyie and Nketiah-Amponsah 2014: 25) and of the social, political and economic power men wield over women. Such poverty perpetuates the cyclic nature of oppression, creating conducive conditions for survival sex as a conceivable response to food insecurity.

Moreover, participants acknowledged that the socio-cultural construction of communities determines the hegemonic configuration of gender, which has implications for women's disproportionate economic disadvantage. Women's extreme poverty is a consequence of structural power that perpetuates structural poverty (Ortner 2006). In this context, situational factors inclusive of vulnerability, abuse, resistance, survival and agency lead to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Vulnerability related to survival sex in the context of food insecurity takes on many forms. The study found that systemic structural inequalities render women economically and politically vulnerable through institutionalized power imbalances and male hegemony in the economy and social arrangements of society. Moreover, women are rendered vulnerable as a result of patriarchal and male hegemonic cultural and religious arrangements of society. Women are also rendered vulnerable at the level of household because men hold the economic upper hand. As a result of these vulnerabilities, women are predisposed to various forms of exploitation and abuse. In this context, individual agency, where women resist food insecurity through survival sex demonstrates the ability to move from positions of diminished agency to a place of increased agency, albeit constrained. This is corroborated by bell hooks (2000: 41, 1990: 36) who maintains that the intensely discriminative

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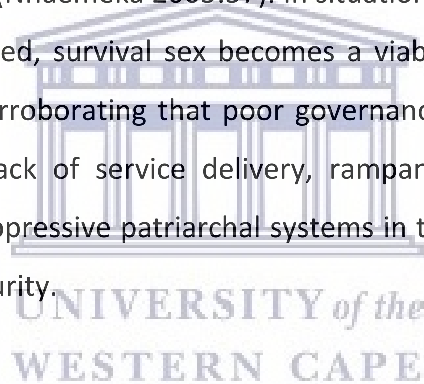
systemic control of Black women is ideologically, socio-economically, socio-culturally and politically constructed to maintain subordination and submission. Participants rightfully observed that, "women struggle the most" in under resourced vicinities of the Msunduzi Municipality.

Relatedly women are disproportionately constrained by limited options and appropriate access. This creates powerlessness, generating vulnerability as they deliberately engage in survival sex. Survival sex in this context allows women to progress from food insecurity to temporary food security, ensuring sustenance and survival for themselves and their families. In the context of extreme disparity and poverty, women themselves have to determine their priorities in the struggle against food insecurity (Nnaemeka 2005:57). In situations where opportunities to resist hunger and starvation are limited, survival sex becomes a viable, available option. Battersby (2015) confirms this finding, corroborating that poor governance, inadequate socio-economic support, poor infrastructure, lack of service delivery, rampant unemployment and system historic injustices, amount to oppressive patriarchal systems in the Msunduzi Municipality that sustains poverty and food insecurity.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In a comparison of the biblical text of Ruth and their own context, participants affirmed that survival sex is not merely a result of pragmatic requirement but as a consequence of institutionalized power. Participants declared that government's failure to support women through employment and educational opportunities together with poor service delivery and a host of other factors, impede women's financial independence and creates conditions conducive for the response of survival sex. Corroborating these findings, a report by Abrahams (2020) maintains that inadequate governmental support together with unaddressed historic injustices drives poverty amongst women.

Participants agreed that accessing meaningful employment is more problematic for women than for men. Women in the communities represented in this study are required to feed entire families on meagre incomes often generated through part-time employment with minimal

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remuneration. In an economic empowerment strategy dossier of women in the Msunduzi Municipality, Kruger (2017: 9) concurs that women earn far less than men. While men are also victims of the structural aspects of job security, women are far more economically disenfranchised because they are more disposed to being relegated to informal sectors of income generation and are often solely tasked with putting food on the table. The finding is also corroborated by Hunter's (2010: 11) analysis that women in disadvantaged communities earn negligibly as compared to men.

Lack of decent housing, poor sanitation systems, inconsistent energy supply, inferior education and insufficient health care entrenches women's poverty and contributes to women's vulnerability to survival sex. As sole income earners and primary caretakers of entire families, women are forced to navigate other income generation within mainstream socio-economic exclusion (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). The narratives also revealed that Black women are recipients of the most violent and crippling effects of food insecurity as their bodies are casualties in the negotiated process of food for sex. These lived realities framed within African womanists' analysis offers the full impact of Black women's struggle and includes issues around her body, being, family, community, nation and continent (Ogunyemi 1985, Ogundipe-Leslie 1994).

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The study revealed that male hegemony and patriarchal ideology are the foundation of women's struggle. Moreover, that revolution that addresses survival sex in the context of food insecurity must confront this vice in all spheres of life where institutionalized hegemonic power directly impacts the wellbeing and livelihoods of women. For liberation to be realized, male domination and female subservience must be addressed. The maintenance and perpetuation of male hegemony at societal and ecclesial levels must be addressed by taking into account the lived realities and experiences of women who struggle the most under the yoke of oppression. In addition, CBS through its interactive processes revealed the importance of taking debates, discussions and analysis around social injustice issues to the very communities affected. Typically, discourses and discussions around the effects of male hegemonic power imbalances

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exist in academic spaces. The pedagogical and community development nature of CBS takes these discourses to the communities affected by particular contextual issues, creating platforms for resistance, transformation and change. Framed in this light, the study brought to recognition, the relationship between knowledge and power through endeavouring to produce knowledge that has the potential to alleviate injustice at grassroots level.

The study also brought to light how hegemonic power and privilege exists for men and systemic constraints exist for women, even in contexts where both men and women are vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. These inherent gender power relations support my analysis and findings that survival sex and food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality is perpetuated through male power in all spheres of life and women's resultant economic disempowerment. The exchange of sex for food therefore must be understood within the economic, political, cultural, social and religious constraints that shape women's lived experience in the absence of opportunities and access. While transactional sex and other forms of sex work has been the subject of critical examination in academic literature from sub-Saharan Africa, as demonstrated in the literature review, there is a scarcity of investigation and analysis relating to survival sex. The oversight in addressing this social problem, I suggest, is that male power even among vulnerable groups remains unexamined, further entrenching women's susceptibility to food insecurity and survival sex. This is exemplified in the participant observation that men hold power over women and women do not have power without men. Furthermore, a negative power dynamic also exists in the form of stigma against women who exchange sex for food. This is exemplified in participant observations of discrimination of women who resort to survival sex. This has the propensity to prevent women from seeking assistance in the face of food insecurity for fear of stigmatization. Recognizing the power stigma has over the lives of food insecure women has the capacity to expose social, cultural and religious norms and standards that accord shame and blame to women who must navigate life within extreme economic disadvantage.

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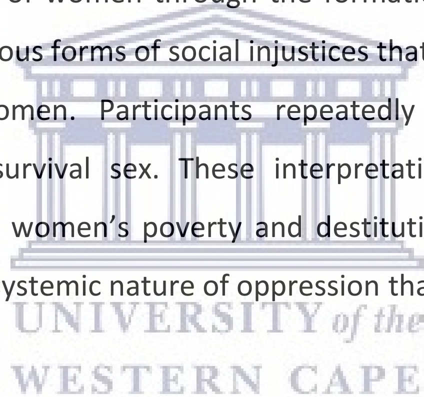
9.4. New Theological Categories

The study contributes to a clearer understanding of the theological incongruities in ecclesial interpretations of survival sex in the context of food insecurity by redefining ecclesial biblical interpretation. Moreover, by according space to the voices of women at community level, the study contributes to the ongoing conversation on sexual exchange from a theological perspective and as Singh (2018: 31) articulates, "to transcend current categories of meaning-making that have been ascribed through sociological inquires, by discovering new theological categories". From the data generated, it became obvious that the interpretation and understanding of survival sex was based on what I term, ecclesial enculturation. Ecclesial enculturation related to the understanding of survival sex is a process whereby local Churches are complicit in the oppression of women through the formation of a socio-cultural/religious environment that facilitates various forms of social injustices that entrench male hegemony and patriarchal conceptions of women. Participants repeatedly offered interpretations that individualized and moralized survival sex. These interpretations elucidated how ecclesial interpretations firstly, entrench women's poverty and destitution and secondly, fails to take into account the structural and systemic nature of oppression that facilitates it.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The idea of the model Christian woman as exemplified in the interpretation of the Book of Ruth for example, construes Ruth's struggle for survival and food security in a way that internalizes and embeds gender inequality. This inequality is only heightened by the idealization of Boaz and serves to propagate male headship, authority and supremacy. Through casting Ruth as a pure and dutiful damsel in distress whose salvation is located in Boaz, the noble, strong and wise leader and future husband, ecclesial enculturation cements patriarchal authority, dominance and control over women. As Christian women, the research participants offered valuable contributions to the way in which they understood survival sex as informed by the theological positionality of their various Church traditions.

The data from the CBS sessions suggest an extremely narrow conception of survival sex in the context of food insecurity particularly as it relates to sin and survival. In Chapter Six I

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demonstrated how participants grappled with the idea that Ruth exchanged her body for survival on the threshing floor. Participants were outraged that such sexual encounters are documented in the Bible. In Chapter Eight I demonstrated how participants viewed Naomi's coercion of Ruth in the exchange of sex for survival as sinful in the eyes of God, the community and the Church. Participants commented that whenever sex is mentioned in the Bible, it is usually associated with sin. It is this simplistic interpretation that inhibits an appropriate response to survival sex in the context of food insecurity at ecclesial level. Deemed as illicit sexual activity, the issue of survival sex was initially moralized by participants, revealing that ecclesial interpretations do not take into account the structural and systemic nature of women's desperation and survival strategies. As a result, women who engage in survival sex as a subsistence strategy are stigmatized by local congregations. This serves as a barrier to effectively address the devastating effects of food insecurity on women's bodies. The data suggests that participants grappled with and attempted to enforce patriarchal class and gender hierarchies as being the appropriate biblical interpretation. The study found that the ecclesial interpretation of survival sex in the context of food insecurity as sinful fails to meet the needs of human welfare and offers little hope for acceptance and support in the day to day struggle against hunger. This notion of sinfulness has strong implications for the lack of value ascribed to women who resort to survival sex to feed themselves and their families. Furthermore, it demonstrates the oppressiveness of ecclesial biblical interpretations and the inability of Church and society to offer meaningful hope in situations where survival sex is often the only option available to women.

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In light of their own community knowledge, participants often paradoxically interpreted survival sex as both a sinful act and a survival strategy. In this study, I maintain that the conception of 'sin' in ecclesial interpretation is wrought through the sin-as-pride-model, as put forward by Acolaste (2001: 130). The sin-as-pride conception is an Augustinian description of sin as essentially prideful, the manifestations of which are seen in extreme self-love and sensuality, resulting in physical gratification, usually of a sexual nature. With reference to Singh (2018: 175), I suggest that survival sex in the context of food insecurity is a self-sacrificial survival strategy and therefore cannot be viewed as prideful or sinful. While participants

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contended with the notion of survival sex as unbecoming Christian conduct, through the processes of CBS, they began to grapple with and eventually accept that it is a survival strategy for desperate women. CBS brought into sharp focus participants' own knowledge of the levels of food insecurity in their communities and of the limited options available to food insecure women. This reference brought to light and provided a conducive space for interrogation and acceptance.

As a result of ecclesial enculturation, participants demonstrated a very narrow understanding of God's presence and action in the world. In addressing survival sex as a moral issue rather than emanating as a result of poverty and destitution, participants revealed that local congregations approach the issue from the perspective of retribution and reward. Participants initial belief during the early stages of the CBS programme was that God will exact divine punishment on women who engage in survival sex as retribution for the supposed sinful act and reward those who in the face of extreme destitution, wait on God to grant them a reprieve from their suffering. Ironically, this was inconsistent with the reality of food insecurity and suffering experienced by participants and their local communities. It was only as participants interpreted the text of Ruth through the liberationist lens of CBS that they began to acknowledge the structural and systemic nature of women's oppression. Upon acquiring a clearer understanding of the notion of retribution and reward and its devastating effects on women who are shunned by local congregations and communities, participants began to acknowledge that it is ecclesial patriarchal biblical interpretation that serves to marginalize and stigmatize people.

With reference to Dube and Kanyoro (2005: 62), I maintain that the theology of retribution and reward is life denying and therefore cannot be God's plan for the world, especially for those who suffer. Dube and Kanyoro (2005: 62) argue that in terms of biblical interpretation, a closer listening to alternative voices in the text demonstrates a critique of the oppressive ideology of retribution and reward. I argue that the adoption of the notion of retribution and reward is as a result of ecclesial enculturation that serves to accord blame and further stigmatize those who suffer under the yoke of food insecurity. Ecclesial enculturation and ecclesial biblical

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interpretation at congregational level are therefore oppressive and life-denying, making it inconsistent with the very tenets of the Christian faith. For the participants, the study brought into sharp focus that hunger and food insecurity is not the inevitable consequence of the supposed evil deed of survival sex but of the structural and systemic oppression of women. This served to emphasise that the relationship between the feminization of poverty and the feminization of survival is directly related to ideological oppression propagated through unequal societal and ecclesial structures and systems.

The data further indicated that issues of justice and equality for women affected by structural and systemic oppression are not key concepts in ecclesial biblical interpretation (Oduyoye 2001a). This in turn had ramifications for participants' views on issues of redemption and hope. CBS, with its liberationist outlook, challenged these interpretive concepts and revealed the androcentric and patriarchal peculiarities inherent in ecclesial interpretation. Through CBS, participants began to acknowledge that such interpretations oppress women and inhibits growth and development. Participants acknowledged that hegemonic masculinities perpetuated by ecclesial interpretations position men as heads of households, the Church and the economy, thereby facilitating and perpetuating the feminization of poverty. These interpretations provide men with sustained power over women. The exploitation of women through the exchange of food for sex is therefore located in the intersecting vulnerabilities to hunger and poverty promulgated through systemic and structural inequalities endorsed by ecclesial biblical interpretation. Even in contexts such as under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality, where all are socially and economically disenfranchised, men still hold the economic upper hand. This is an indication of how the mechanisms of hegemonic power operate and shape the struggles of food insecure women. The basis of survival is determined by who has access to food.

Participants expressed a yearning for redemption and hope regarding the scourge of food insecurity and women's sacrificial offering of their bodies so their families could eat. Drawing on Oduyoye (2004: 45), I locate the redemptive work of the Church in the African experience of

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turning to God and acknowledging "the perversions of human nature that makes it possible for some to prey on others and for individuals to trample upon the humanity of others." CBS brought to light that the redemptive work of the Church should incorporate the liberation of women from patriarchal domination and offer hope to the vulnerable by engaging concertedly in the elimination of dehumanization in societies. I argue that redemption from the oppression of survival sex must take into account issues of injustice. This is an important component that is lacking in ecclesial biblical interpretation. Framed in this light, it is the patriarchal captivity of women endorsed by ecclesial biblical interpretation that undermines the envisioned work of the Church to fight for liberation of all people from all forms of injustice (Tarus 2014: 5).

Through CBS, biblical interpretations were produced that brought to light the need for practical and pragmatic actions that are life-sustaining for women living on the margins of society. These actions have the capacity to challenge oppressive interpretations. Resultantly, participants began to make concerted efforts to view survival sex from the perspective of women's socio-economic, socio-cultural, socio-religious and political oppression. Moreover, through CBS, participants began to more comprehensively grasp that women's suffering and survival strategies are as a direct result of institutionalized structural and systemic inequalities and domination that perpetuates poverty and food insecurity among women. Participants began to acknowledge that how the Church interprets and understands notions of sin and survival, justice, redemption and hope are important considerations in life-affirming responses to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Moreover, that ecclesial enculturation often promulgated through ecclesial biblical interpretation inhibits the role of the Church as a community of "men and women walking together on the journey home, with the Church as the umbrella of faith, hope and love" (Oduyoye 2004: 99).

9.5. Limitations

In general, CBS is conducted with organized groups of people within faith communities or faith-based organizations. In order to conduct this research, I needed to gain access to an organized group of women who represented the various under resourced areas in the Msunduzi

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Municipality. Hence my choice of PACSA as gatekeeper for my research. The participants needed to understand the inner workings of their communities and how food insecurity plays out within those communities. Moreover, because my research was concerned with biblical interpretation of survival sex in the context of food insecurity, participants needed to be regular readers of the Bible and familiar with their local congregation's interpretations of the story of Ruth. This is not to say that people who are not Christian or do not read the Bible regularly cannot participate in CBS. However, in order to answer the specific theological questions this study raised, the criteria for participation was Christian women from under resourced areas in the Msunduzi Municipality. PACSA, being familiar with CBS since the method was used extensively when they operated as a faith-based organization and their work with food insecurity in the Msunduzi Municipality made them an obvious choice as gatekeeper. The study therefore excluded the voices of women from faiths other than Christianity. Moreover, the study did not focus on accessing women who are actually directly involved in the practice of survival sex. Despite these limitations, I believe this study made a valuable contribution to better understanding the problem of survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

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Another limitation is that the research participants represented various denominations of Christianity, namely, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian and Pentecostal. My observations were therefore on how the Church understood and interpreted survival sex in the context of food insecurity. Had the participants been from a single denomination, the study may have afforded a more nuanced understanding of how a particular Christian denomination addresses survival sex theologically. Having said that, I acknowledge that there are gaps and differences in the ways in which various denominations respond theologically and pastorally to social concerns such as survival sex in the context of food insecurity.

9.6. Areas for Further Research

The focus of this study, how Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality understand survival sex in the context of food insecurity excluded a number of significant voices. Further research can be conducted using CBS with different groups. It would be interesting to see how a group of

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Christian men, for example, understand the problem of survival sex and the patriarchal vices that facilitate women's subordination, oppression and poverty. A research initiative which identifies and conducts CBS with women who actually resort to survival sex to mitigate food insecurity could reveal other theological deficiencies not considered in this particular project. Research using CBS and conducted with women from one particular Christian denomination could produce a more nuanced understanding of the theological responses and deficiencies related to the exchange of sex for food. In addition, research using CBS that takes into consideration a pastoral care model would enhance the ecclesial and pastoral responses to women who have no other option but to resort to survival sex in the context of food insecurity. CBS of this nature designed and conducted with clergy would enhance the ecclesial and pastoral responses related to the practice of survival sex.

9.7. Concluding Remarks

Ultimately, this study demonstrated CBS's reliability as a data gathering instrument. In addition, it established CBS's capacity to challenge and reform oppressive interpretations and engender a positive conception of how societies can address issues of injustice and oppression. As demonstrated through this study, ecclesial interpretations endorse patriarchy with its structural, systemic and hegemonic oppression of women. The study demonstrated that survival sex in the context of food insecurity is not only a social and political problem but a theological problem as well. Appropriate theological and ecclesial responses to survival sex in the context of food insecurity must therefore foreground issues of justice, redemption and hope from the perspective of women's disenfranchisement in both Church and society. In listening to the voices of women through mediums that are contextually based such as CBS, the ecclesial and theological paradigms regarding survival sex in the context of food insecurity can be expanded. This will serve to better understand the challenges women face as a result of institutionalized ideological oppression. Contextually based programs such as CBS can be used to serve congregations and wider society in several ways. Contextually based challenges such as the effects of food insecurity on the lives of women and under resourced communities in general can be more comprehensively determined and addressed. A clearer understanding of

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how patriarchal interpretations of biblical texts impede the growth of women in congregations and women in wider society can be achieved. Moreover, a more nuanced understanding of how religious prejudice affects already marginalized people can be attained and comprehensively addressed.

As I write the concluding remarks of this thesis, I am reminded of the pervasive nature of institutionalized dominance and oppression and the turmoil and suffering it wreaks on the lives of the most vulnerable in society. I am reminded of the distress, devastation and trauma the structural problem of food insecurity inflicts on individuals and communities. Food insecurity is the ultimate manifestation of the violence of poverty. The violence of poverty is made manifest through the dangerous and life-denying survival strategies people, particularly women, must resort to in order to feed themselves and their families. A more concerted effort must be made to empower women and girls and to transform relationships and power dynamics between men and women. It is therefore incumbent on all stakeholders – be it government, society, the Church, activists, NGO's and academics, to advocate for the eradication of structural and systemic oppression and the food security of all people in South Africa as a basic human right. Complicity in the face of suffering and food insecurity only serves to perpetuate and sustain the vice of patriarchal captivity that allows for the perpetuation of the indignity of having to exchange sex for food. The challenge of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in South Africa must ignite a desire for innovation, collaboration and transformation.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Faculty of Arts

University of the Western Cape

Mr Michael Malinga

Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action

170 Hoosen Haffejee Street

Pietermaritzburg

3201

KwaZulu-Natal

October 2017

Dear Mr Malinga

Re: Gatekeepers Permission to Conduct Research

As per my recent communication with you, Mr Michael Malinga (Process Facilitator) and the support group that you facilitate in Pietermaritzburg, I hereby formally request permission to conduct research with the support group of low income women from various areas in the Msunduzi Municipality affiliated with the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA). Since PACSA is engaged in continuous interaction and community development efforts with the group, you are ideally placed to act as gatekeeper for my research. As a faith-based social justice and development NGO, I deem PACSA to be an invaluable gatekeeper to my research. Your focus on food insecurity, socio-economic rights, livelihoods, gender justice and development issues as well as your outstanding and on-going work with the PACSA Food Price Barometer which tracks the impact of rising food prices on low income groups is extremely relevant for my study.

The research topic is, 'Food, sex and text: exploring survival sex in the context of food security in South Africa through communal readings of the Book of Ruth'. The study seeks to explore, through communal readings of the story of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible, via the method of contextual Bible study, how Christian women in the Msunduzi Municipality understand the

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problem of survival sex in the context of food insecurity. The research will be conducted over a period of four months from March 2018 to June 2018.

The study will produce information that may be used to understand the extent to which food insecurity and a host of other social woes and inequalities render low income women vulnerable. The contextual Bible study process may serve to conscientise communities on matters of social injustice and the plight of the vulnerable and may lead to community and individual
empowerment.

The researcher's details are as follows:

'an: Prof DJ Brown, djbrown@uwc . ac. za aculty Manager: Ms S Mcwatts smcwatts@uwc . ac . za

•an' s Administrator: Ms JS E lusk, j flusk@uwc. ac . za rivate Bag X 17 Bellville 7535 South Africa

: +27(0) 0 1959 2235 F: + L 7 (0) 21959 36

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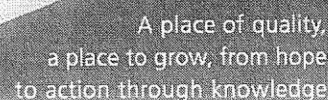

- Name: Linda Naicker
- Level of Study: PhD
- Institution: University of the Western Cape
- Department: Religion and Theology
- Faculty: Arts
- Supervisor: Prof Sarojini Nadar

As a researcher I guarantee that:

- All participants understand fully the purpose of the research as outlined in the information sheet and are given the opportunity to ask questions.
- All participants understand that participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw from the process at any time without having to furnish any reasons and without any negative consequences. Also, that they are free to decline answering of any question should they wish.
- All participants are protected by using pseudonyms and not their real names. I will ensure that participants names will not be linked with the research materials and participants will not be identifiable in the PhD that will be produced.
- I will ensure that all information is stored in a password protected folder on my personal computer and my supervisor will be the only other person having access to the information. All participants are made aware that all CBS sessions will be audio recorded and participants are free to opt out of the process at any time without consequence. All participants are made aware that if they do not want to be recorded, they will not be recorded or their voices will be removed from the final recordings according to their specific wishes.
- The data collected will be used to compile my PhD thesis.
- All participants give written consent to take part in the research.
- All participants will be provided with the name of a therapist in the Pietermaritzburg area which they would be able to access, free of charge,

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should the need of arise. The details of the therapist will be contained in the information letter as well as the letter of informed consent.

Should you have any queries regarding the above mentioned research or need clarity on any matter we discussed, you are welcome to contact me via email at l.w.naicker@gmail.com or my supervisor, Prof Sarojini Nadar at snadar@uwc.ac.za.

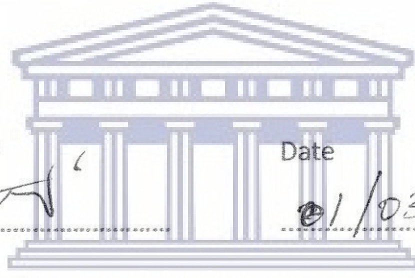
I wish to convey my sincerest gratitude to you and PACSA for granting me this permission and promise to work with the highest level of integrity, professionalism and empathy.

Sincerely
Linda Naicker

Signature Date 01/03/201

Permission granted for the above request

Mr Michael Malinga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Signature Date 01/03/18

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Appendix B

UNIVERSITY of the
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Department of Religion and Theology

Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 South Africa

Telephone: (021) 959-2206

Fax: (021) 959-1318

Chair email: jklaasen@uwc.ac.za

Participant information sheet

Study Title: Food sex and text: exploring survival sex in the context of food security in South Africa through communal readings of the Book of Ruth

Researcher: Linda Naicker, Department of Religion and Theology, Faculty of Arts, University of the Western Cape

Dear participant,

My name is Linda Naicker. I am a PhD student at the University of the Western Cape. As part of my studies, I am doing research under the supervision of Prof Sarojini Nadar from the University of the Western Cape. I hereby invite you to take part in my research. Before agreeing, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of my study, what you will be doing in the study and your right to leave the study at any time.

What the study is about and your role in the study

At each contextual Bible study session we will read together passages from the Book of Ruth in

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the Hebrew Bible. We will be focusing on the issue of survival sex and food insecurity. Survival sex can be described as the exchange of sex for food and/or shelter and happens most often when people have no other choice. Food insecurity is when people cannot afford to buy or grow enough food to feed themselves and their families in order to live healthy lives. We will read the story of Ruth and discuss what the story is about. We will then discuss what the important points in the story are and whether this story reminds us of women in our own communities who experience food insecurity. This will lead us into a discussion on the struggles food insecure women in our communities' experience. We will discuss how food insecurity affects our communities and why people are sometimes unable to afford enough food to be healthy. A discussion on how people in the story deal with food insecurity will be followed by what is similar between the story and what we see in our own communities. The dangers that exist when people are food insecure in the story and what decisions they make will lead to a discussion on the decisions food insecure women in our own communities sometimes make. We will do eleven contextual Bible studies sessions between August and September 2018 at the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA), 170 Hoosen Haffejee Street, Pietermaritzburg. All contextual Bible studies will be done in English. A trained interpreter will also be present to help us in case we find it difficult to understand each other or we feel we are better able to speak in isiZulu. I also have a fair grasp of the Zulu language and am able to communicate easily in isiZulu.

If you agree, you will participate in contextual Bible studies that should take around 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete. You will not have to pay any money for taking part in the study and there is no payment for you to be in the study. However, your transport costs will be paid and refreshments will be provided.

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Benefits

The study will help us understand how survival sex and food insecurity affects women who live in our communities. Contextual Bible studies may help us understand better the social injustices that lead to food insecurity and how women in our communities suffer. Contextual Bible study may also lead to community and individual empowerment.

Participation in the study

You will not be forced to take part in the study and you take part of your own free will. To take part, you have to agree in writing. You will be provided with a consent form to read and sign. You may choose to no longer be involved in the study at any time without any unpleasant or negative effects or having to provide reasons for choosing to leave. You may also choose not to answer a question or questions if you do not wish to do so. All contextual Bible study sessions will be audio recorded and our discussion will also be written down on newsprints. You will be free to choose whether you wish your voices to be recorded or not. If you do not want to be recorded, you will not be recorded or your voice will be removed from the final recordings according to your specific wishes. You are free to ask me any questions about the study at any time and if you have difficulty with any part of the contextual Bible study session, you may ask me to explain anything relating to the study.

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You will not be required to share any personal information for the study. The study seeks only to find out how Christian women understand the problem of survival sex in the context of food insecurity in your specific communities. Because the study deals with the very sensitive issues of survival sex and food insecurity, you may experience some discomfort during the process. In case this happens, a therapist will be made available to all participants should you need help in dealing with any problem related to the study, free of charge. I, Linda Naicker, will transport you to the therapist's rooms at a given time if the need arises without any cost to you. The details of the therapist are as follows:

Dr Cindy Coleman (Clinical Psychologist)
Akeso Clinic
216 Woodhouse Road
Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg
Cell: 083 290 3069

Confidentiality
All information from this study will be kept strictly private. All identifying information will be removed from the data and all data will be kept in a password protected folder on my (the researcher's) personal computer for a period of five years and destroyed thereafter. The results of this study will be used to compile my PhD dissertation. Pseudonyms (different names) and not your real names will be used to make sure you remain unknown. I will ensure that your names will not be mentioned or connected to the research materials and you will not be identifiable in the PhD that will be produced. My supervisor, Prof Sarojini Nadar will be the only other person that has access to the information.

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Contact details
If you have any questions about this research, please contact me by telephone on 072 649 3157 or by email at l.w.naicker@gmail.com. You may also contact my supervisor, Prof Sarojini Nadar at snadar@uwc.ac.za.

Participant's Name	Signature	Date

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Appendix C

Department of Religion and Theology

Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 South Africa

Telephone: (021) 959-2206

Fax: (021) 959-1318

Chair email: jklaasen@uwc.ac.za

Informed Consent Form University of the Western

Research Title

Food, sex and text: exploring survival sex in the context of food security in South Africa through communal readings of the Book of Ruth

Researcher: Linda Naicker

Please initial or tick the box if you agree:

1. I have read and I understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the chance to ask questions about the study ☐

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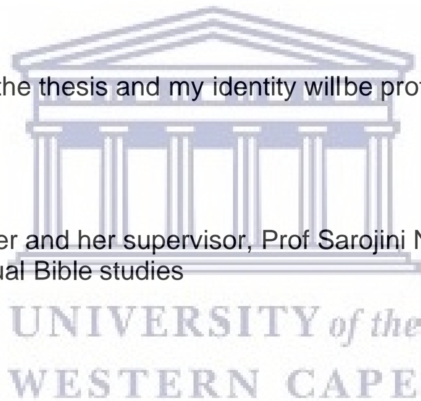
2. I am not forced to take part in the study and I take part of my own free will ☐

3. I do not have to answer a question or questions if I do not wish to do so ☐

4. I can leave the study at any time without giving any reason for leaving ☐

5. My comments will be audio recorded and written down on newsprints and I can ask at any time for my voice not to be recorded or removed from the final recording ☐

6. My real name will not be used in the thesis and my identity will be protected at all times ☐



7. Only the researcher, Linda Naicker and her supervisor, Prof Sarojini Nader will have access to the data from the contextual Bible studies ☐

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8. The contextual Bible studies will be in English and an interpreter will be available if I wish to speak in isiZulu ☐

9. I do not have to give any personal information during the contextual Bible study sessions ☐
.

10. A therapist is available to me free of charge should I feel any discomfort during the contextual Bible study sessions ☐

11. I will not be paid to take part in the contextual Bible studies ☐

12. My transport costs will be paid and refreshments provided ☐

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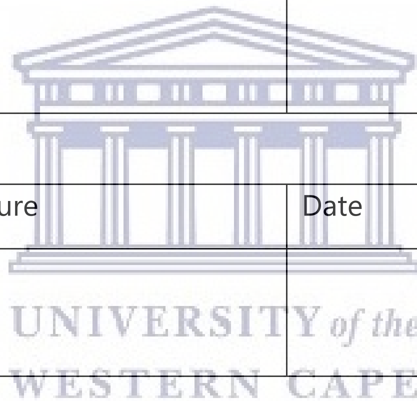
13. I will not share any information from the contextual Bible studies outside of the group ☐

14. I agree to take part in the above research project ☐

Contact details

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me by telephone on 072 649 3157 or by email at l.w.naicker@gmail.com. You may also contact my supervisor, Prof Sarojini Nadar at snadar@uwc.ac.za.

Participant's Name	Signature	Date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Researcher's Name	Signature	Date
Linda Naicker		

Researcher:	Supervisor:	HOD:
Linda Naicker	Prof Sarojini Nadar	Dr John Klaasen

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