> ### *Finding Faith & Relationships of Love:*
> ## An Ethnography of spirituality in experiences of loss amongst women in Grassy Park

By:

Raisa Moola
MLXRAI001

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Supervisor: Dr. Divine Fuh

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role spirituality and a relationship with God plays in processes of healing and meaning-making amongst women dealing with realities and experiences of loss. Referred to herein as "material connections"; women who have experienced various kinds of loss such as: the loss of jobs, partners, intimate relationships, finances/money use spirituality to make these experiences meaningful. Building on Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*, I try to understand how loss of meaning occurs when reality is not in line with expectations and how people find ways in spirituality to deal with it. The thesis employs an ethnographic approach over two month's period amongst a group of women in Grassy Park involving in-depth interviews and participant observation. This paper argues that the cultivation of a spirituality hinged on a deeply personal relationship with God provides the means to address past experiences of loss, struggle and difficulty for women who have been in situations of violence and abuse. Gender Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence is a pervasive social issue in the Western Cape which is often addressed in a variety of social or macro level ways through the provision of support groups, educational programs or awareness raising campaigns. However, being an issue that is not just prevalent in physical manifestations but is often largely represented as such, often the emotional and mental impact and the way in which this is dealt with on an individual level leaves much to be explored. Through an NGO called Love in Action, which provides both group support and practical tools as well as emotional, mental and spiritual fortitude for women who have experienced GBV, this provided the platform to consider the latter of these issues. Overall, the paper demonstrates that spirituality is a meaning-making process which is a way for the ladies to move on and make sense of their past experiences. It allows people to be re-embedded socially and to reconstitute intimate human relationships undone by experiences of loss.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Background

Research Question and Argument

This paper **what role spirituality and a relationship with God plays in processes of meaning-making and how it becomes a core part of dealing with realities or experiences of loss.** There are three parts to this question which this dissertation will seek to argue and address. Firstly, what are these realities of loss which need to be *meaningfully* dealt with in order to be addressed? Secondly, in this meaningful dealing with loss, how and why is spirituality and a relationship with God important or helpful? And finally, what is the impact or effect of this spiritual dealing-with throughout and after this process?

To begin unpacking this a bit more, this reasearch paper argues that people whose early life experiences are marked by instances of seperation from initimate or familial relationships, as well as other experiences of the loss of partners, jobs or material forms of security, envisage and imaginitively create new ways to address and make sense of these realities. One of the ways in which this occurs is through reimagined and revitalised forms of spirituality or, more specifically, a deeply personal relationship with God. It is also argued then that this relationship with God allows these people to socially reconnect with others, especially after their previous experiences of loss resulted in a sense of disconnection and disjuncture.

The question then arises of the ways in which these three facets of disconnection, creative reimagining and reconnection occurs. This paper then focusses on the very specific and varied forms of loss which each of the participants experienced, specifically termed as material or earthly losses, and how this resulted in a sense of dislocation particularly due a disjuncture between a sense of expectation and reality. Thereafter, what is unpacked is how this disjunture is explained to address the nuances of these losses directly, and specifically through an intimate relationship with God and a strong cultivation of a spiritual life. This relationship is shown to be the participants' main source of meaning, sense and stability in their lives, while at the same time serves to reembed or reestablish the participants in their social spheres from which they had been isolated or had come unsettled due to their negative experiences. This paper explores how the

impact of material losses actively results in the creation of a spiritual relationship to provide meaning and reconstitute individuals socially.

Motivation

The subject of this dissertation is very close to heart. My motivation stems from witnessing my mother go through numerous ordeals as a survivor of domestic abuse. Particularly I aim, in part, to address a disparity in my cognitive knowledge wherein my mom on the one hand embodied an independent, willful and career-driven woman, and on the other, someone who was often at the mercy of her abusive partners. This spurred the gendered aspect of this paper. I would often witness my mother, especially after a particularly physically, emotionally or mentally violent occurrence, seek out her prayer mat and perform *salah*[1] or say a *dua*[2]. After having done so she seemed to embody a calmer and more introspective demeanour. These conversations with God seemed indicative of a meaningful and safe space of solace which helped my mom deal with her situation. These pushed me to ask critical questions about spirituality and its place in healing. This dissertation is therefore a step towards seeking to understand the varied and creative ways in which spirituality[3], often considered irrational, plays a role in how some women address their realities.

Context

With the assistance of the University of Cape Town's Knowledge Co-Op I was put in contact with an NGO called Love in Action[4], who for twenty years has provided much needed legal assistance and advice for women who are or have been in circumstances of domestic abuse or legally difficult separations from their partners. I was introduced to the CEO of the NGO before attending a weekly group meeting which was held on a Baptist church's premises in Grassy Park, Cape Town.

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[1] One of the five mandatory pillars of Islam, the daily prayer ritual.
[2] Arabic term for "prayer"
[3] My use of the term "spirituality" as opposed to "religion" will be elucidated in the next chapter.
[4] Eleanor, the CEO and founder of Love in Action, deemed it unnecessary for me to anonymise the organisation.

Gender-based violence is a pervasive social (and personal) issue which this paper is motivated by and contextually framed within. Recent statistics in the Western Cape show that "thirty-nine percent of women experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime including intimate partner and non-partner violence" (Chipatiso, *et al.*, 2014: 7), although that "most of the violence occurred within intimate relationships and was predominantly emotional, a form of GBV not usually addressed" (*ibid.*). The latter part of this – that emotional violence is not thoroughly researched or dealt with socially – is another one of the reasons for the focus of this research paper; I will not be focusing on GBV or IPV particularly, but will rather seek a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which women agentively deal with or address situations of trauma and struggle, one of these being through the lens of spirituality.

While this paper is not geared towards unpacking the tenets and specificities of Baptist Christianity (which the participants belong to)citself, but rather focusses on the participants' more personal articulations of how their spirituality is meaningful to them, it would be beneficial to briefly outline the roots and current existence of Charismatic Christianity in South Africa to contextualise this research more broadly, and to situate the background and involvement of an important feature of the participants lives. Charismatic forms of Christianity such as Pentecostalism and Baptism were brought into South Africa through missionisation movements and in the 60s were predominantly white and middle-class (Anderson, 2005). After proliferation into rural areas, Charismatic churches and the messages preached resonated strongly with black and other marginalised and oppressed groups of people, so becoming "important centres of cohesion, support and continuity" (Anderson, 2005:70) and thereafter, especially during Apartheid, spaces of resistance. The reason for this resonance with oppressed groups can be understood through the fact that the Bible's messages and explanations around poverty, its sacrificial metaphors and particularly Charismatic Christianity's definitive feature of casting out evil spirits, healing and spiritual struggles (Jenkins and Myers, 2006) are relatable to some African cultures and experience, particularly under oppressive rule. Conversely however, another facet of this form of Christianity was the creation of a subjectivity unquestioning of the inequalities existent in a capitalist and industrialised labour sphere wherein "its primary focus was the subject divided, charged with the duty of creating an immortal self, and submitting the body, now shameful and transient, to sober constraint" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1986: 12).

While the Baptist church which the participants attend does not subscribe to overt forms of Charismatic Christianity such as the casting out of spirits or speaking in tongues, baptism is a fundamental ritual, as is vocal and uninhibited praise and worship songs and dances in church[5]. However, these aforementioned historical and contextual features of Charismatic Christianity, such as the focus on evil spirits, the sacrificial nature of the faith and the focus on explaining wealth or poverty in this earthly life, are relevant and meaningful to the participants' life experiences, particularly as Coloured women from lower to middle income groups who have dealt with many financial difficulties.

From the aforementioned initial larger group meeting which was about equipping the women with spiritual, legal and emotional tools and fortitude to deal with their situations - it was evident the role spirituality played for the ladies of Love in Action, wherein the meeting began and ended with a prayer and the emotional and mental guidelines and tips were often drawn from Scriptures about strength and resilience. After this meeting I introduced myself, my intended research, the reasons for doing it, the ethical parameters and stated that it was wholly voluntary. Several women volunteered to participate in interviews with me throughout the course of June and July, and after two ladies a few days later had some reservations and declined to continue, I began fieldwork with five participants. Mary, Clarise, Nel, Carol and Lauren (pseudonyms) all belong to the Baptist church in Grassy Park, although occasionally Lauren would attend a church outside the area if weather and transportation permitted. Demographically, the participants are quite similar having all grown up in the Western Cape, if not Cape Town itself, living in the same geographic location, and racially part of the Coloured community. The ladies varied in age from early 40s to early 70s, and besides one woman who resides with her husband and young children, the other four participants are single, widowed or divorced but often share their homes or properties with other tenants, and hence are not socially isolated or alone, despite four of the participants not having intimate partners currently. In terms of class or economic standing, Grassy Park is a predominantly Coloured area, was subject to the Group Areas Act under the Apartheid regime, and now consists of mainly low to middle income residents. I am choosing not to go into much more contextual or personal detail with regards to the participants, as my main

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[5] I was able to participate and witness this through some church services I attended at the behest of the participants.

ethical concern and a request from the participants was that they remain anonymous and not wholly identifiable. Hence, I am choosing instead to let their narratives of spiritulaity throughout this paper speak for themselves in constructing a fuller picture. While the demographics and contextual information is not fleshed out thoroughly because of this ethical issue, it is not irrelevant and this basic information serves to partially locate the participants. Additionally, it should be noted that while there is a gendered focus in this paper, gender and race, or rather the fact that I have worked with only Coloured women needs to be delimited. It should be noted that men's perspectives and narratives, or people from other racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds might be wholly different from the articulations explicated henceforth, due solely to the fact that life experiences and hence understandings of the world are deeply coloured by gendered and racialised presentations and embodiments, as well given everyday idiosycracies of a person and their life. This research paper therefore only speaks to the experiences of a small sample of people and should not be taken as generally representative.

Structure and Organisation

This paper organised into six chapters. Chapter one introduces and frames the research question. Chapter Two is focused on ethical and methodological quandaries faced in the field are unpacked. In Chapter Three the theoretical framework of this paper is set up as is the existing literature on some of the themes of this dissertation. Chapter Four explores the experiences of loss, struggle and trauma faced by the participants. Chapter Five unpacks the relationship and impact of these losses directly in terms of their conceptions of spirituality. The last chapter frames the ways in which their spirituality now situates and locates the participants in their social and communal spheres of life.

Chapter Two: Methodology and Ethics

Abstract

Central to this dissertation are understandings of spirituality as meaningful and central to addressing losses experienced. This chapter outlines how particular ethnographic techniques were employed to focus on and discern these particular spiritual, emotional and cognitive articulations, as well as the ethical issues faced due also to the deeply personal and emotional nature of the interviews.

During the heart of Cape Town's rainiest months, June and July, I began my fieldwork. Hand in hand with icy winds, horizontal rain and overcast skies, one also conjures up images of the comfort of being indoors, ensconced by the warmth of coffee and tea heating one up from the inside, almost as a barrier to the chaotic weather. This mirrors my experience of fieldwork - a duration of time distinct and memorable in which internal and personal narratives were relayed and heard (to analogise - the warm drinks), within a larger framework of the undiscovered territory of the researcher-participant relationship (the rainy winter weather). I will situate and explore the intricacies involved in the navigation of this new relationship, particularly, the anthropological methodologies and ethics employed during my fieldwork.

 To further build on the main conceptual framework employed in this dissertation, I understand the fieldwork process as a *habitus* of research - a space, place and temporal locatedness which was "constituted in practice and [was] always oriented towards practical functions" (Bourdieu, 1990: 52). A *habitus* in which both the participants and myself were agents in a particular structure of the researcher-participant dynamic, constantly in navigation, provocation and creativity. Additionally, and following the ethical guidelines outlined by Anthropology Southern Africa (2005) it is evident that the researcher cannot pragmatically carry out their research and interact with participants unmindfully or unreflectively (Caplan, 2003) - ethics and anthropological methodology are mutually imbricated and one cannot enact either without the cognisance of each. Hence why I am choosing not to separate these spheres but will rather detail the intersections of either through the research process while concurrently depicting the pragmatics of my fieldwork experience.

My first introduction with my potential participants can be deemed participant observation - I attended, and several times thereafter as well, one of Love in Action's group meetings wherein the women were given practical advice on how to navigate the law, and their emotional and mental well-being in light of their experiences with abusive individuals in their lives. I noted that the narratives employed were resonant with Christian morals and ethics about how to treat each other and themselves, drawing on scripture from the Bible. At the end of the first meeting there was an emotional group prayer in which I felt it necessary to join in, calling on and thanking God for strength and fortitude for the ladies, led by one woman. Thereafter, I was given the space to explain my intended research more fully and I exchanged numbers and addresses with five women who were willing to chat to me. I relay the details of this first meeting as it paved the way for me as a researcher to begin to be aware of the emotional import of spiritual narratives - that is, religious belief and the enactment of it - in these women's lives. This thereby enhancing and affecting the way in which I conducted fieldwork thereafter. Bodie (2008) states that the act of listening goes hand in hand with the context and the intention of the listener - I went in with the particular purpose of finding participants and gaining a sense of the space as a researcher, through observing the group meeting, particularly listening to the narratives articulated. And thereafter participating in the prayer, again by listening - further enhanced by the fact that we had our eyes closed throughout the prayer - resulting in an aural sensory experience which seemed to heighten the emotive feeling even more. This emotion felt was due to the fact that I was not relying solely on reading people's body language or conversing with them in a "conventional" way for an introductory meeting, but rather found myself engaging in the act of prayer that was evidently very meaningful and central for them with our eyes closed and our hands clasped - thus intensifying a communal feeling of togetherness.

I note with particular emphasis the emotive aspect of this first meeting as I left feeling a plethora of strong emotions. While van Wyk's (2015) account of the ethics of dislike in the field did not resonate for me, she does state that her research was at times "unpleasant, confrontational and left me emotionally drained" (van Wyk, 2015: 205). This was the first ethical issue I faced - knowing the nature of my research and the participants' experiences, and more so because abuse has a personal resonance for me, I had to ensure the careful and healthy management of my emotions and the feelings of my participants'. More so being aware of the precarious, vulnerable

and difficult situations some of the ladies had been in, I had to ensure that they were fully protected and not subject to any harm (Anthropology Southern Africa, 2005). While I did have mental health and support structures in place if needed as did the ladies from Love in Action, I addressed this ethical issue in the way I conducted my research - that is, mainly through a particular type of interview process which can be seen as a *habitus* of empathetic listening, wherein there was constant and agentive navigations of the space by myself and the participants.

Firstly, I texted each of the five ladies to confirm a time to have an introductory meeting individually- they had all discussed with me in person prior where their preferences to meet were. Besides Clarise (pseudonym) whom I met with in coffee shops, I interviewed the other ladies in their homes where they lived with other tenants. Mary (pseudonym) however, did live alone but was encountering a tenuous separation from her husband who would sometimes arrive at her house uninvited. She assured me that it was safe every time I did interview her, however I was fearful of my presence causing undue difficulties for her but she was adamantly sure that it was safe and put her trust in the Lord to protect her. I met with each of the ladies several times, ensured their anonymity and at the beginning of each different interview I confirmed whether I could record them. I would also explicitly state that if they said something they did not want included, I would strike it from the eventual transcription - this happened on a few occasions. Fluehr-Lobban (2002) states that participant observation creates a space of a natural and social process of interaction, consent and acceptance, implying that with participant observation there comes a natural ease of relatability, this presumably as opposed to the assumed stringency of interviewing. However, since I was utilising mainly interviews, the only way I could ensure informed, ongoing and negotiated consent was through this constant explicit reaffirmation in each interview. This in addition to my final group interview with the ladies wherein I received their feedback on my formative themes for my dissertation (thereby having their views be deeply implicated in the research output), was a way for the power dynamics inherent in a participant-researcher relationship to be levelled.

This ethical and methodological negotiation of power dynamics is visible in the type of interview space created, experienced and maintained by both the participants and myself. Firstly, based on the first group meeting and discerning the centrality of spiritual discourses, as well as similar

personal experiences of the ladies' situations of abuse, I was able to employ a form of "engaged listening" (Forsey, 2010: 560). This methodology focusses on the idea that even in participant observation, the researcher receives information that is "more aural than ocular, the ethnographer is more participant *listener* than observer" (Forsey, 2010: 561, emphasis added). In other words, based on the fact that I was initially able to discern the centrality of spiritual discourses in the women's lives and the relatability allowed for given my personal and similar experiences to the ladies, I decided to pursue a methodology consisting mostly of interviews in which I focussed on the meanings and nuances of the individual's spirituality. With regards to my own experiences as a grounds for relatability and considering the fact "that listeners are biased information processors relying on prior knowledge, prior conversational units, and relational history to interpret spoken language" (Bodie, 2008: 113) , I was able to empathise and socialise (Bodie, 2008) with the women in a way that might have been significantly less meaningfully nuanced had my research not been driven by this personal trajectory and personal history. To understand this differently, the bringing of my *habitus* into the *habitus* experienced and maneuvered by the ladies allowed for the creation of a new and enlivened space of research in which the researcher-participant relationship was hinged on created and meaningful interactions based on past experience and equally constructed by myself and the ladies in ways that display agency and understanding.

A practical way in which I employed engaged and empathetic listening was through interpreting the emotive intonations and feelings of oral narratives through body language, tone of voice and gleaning "a sense of mood" (Field, 2006: 35) which allowed for me to ask content appropriate questions at the right time. For example, Lauren (pseudonym) told me about her husband who had passed away several years ago and began to cry as she still misses him dearly. I did not respond immediately but rather gave her the space to compose herself and continue talking. Comparatively, Nel (pseudonym) relayed an incident of childhood gender-based violence but was quite jovial and unaffected in the telling of it as that was not the point she was making but it was rather in relation to something else she was speaking about, hence the conversation between us continued as normal. I came to learn Lauren's temperament as quite sensitive and introverted in bigger groups while Nel exuded positivity and joviality in general. Entering the field with relatability and empathy certainly allowed for a sense of discernment in navigating each lady's

interviews and personalities however, learning and being fully cognisant of body language, tones and moods were vital to the conduction of fieldwork. In relation to this, another main ethical concern for me was to prevent emotional harm to both myself and the women (who had experienced and were currently experiencing trauma).

In the interviewing then I steered clear of asking direct questions concerning the specificity of their instances of trauma, unless they chose to talk about those situations. Field (2006) states that "talking about feelings or traumatic memories is not always the best strategy; listeners need to respect the speaker's right to silence" (33). Ross (2001) echoes this with regards to the silences evocative of meaning of women's testimonies during the TRC process, and also shows that these women did not relate traumatic events in a vacuum but rather situated it within the locus of relations that shaped or resulted in the event. In the same way that I did not directly ask questions about the trauma as well as being discerning of heavy silences, listening to narratives allowed for a broadened gaze of nuanced understanding of meaning, context and experience (Forsey, 2010). In other words, I chose to focus on and dig deeper into the import of spirituality in relation to other events in the participants' lives - spirituality was the central locus of conversation and made even more meaningful in relation other things or events experienced by the women. Furthermore and because of this conscious focus on spirituality as a preventative measure to avoid emotional pain in the interview process, this has also shaped the way in which this ethnography will be written. The dissertation is not challenging the truth claims of the participants' religious beliefs, nor will it cast them in the light of victims to circumstances of trauma. Rather, and as will aim to show the import of spirituality as an engaged and creative process in negotiating and making meaningful certain life experiences.

In line with the above and important in this *habitus* of fieldwork is the notion of agency. The participants, having already come from situations wherein their control was wrought from them, it was important that the questions I asked did not cast them as passive victims (Ross, 2001), further entrenching something that might not have been representative of them or depictive of something they were working towards overcoming. This focus on questions of the participants' spirituality was a method employed ethically in order to prevent emotional harm and a way that did "not erase the nuances of individual agency" (Field, 2006: 34), more so given that the ladies

are seen as or having been in vulnerable positions. On the other hand, there is an instance of agency that is perhaps indicative of an ethical dilemma created in relation to notions of accountability or continuity in a participant-researcher dynamic.

After I had completed the interviews in July, I informed the ladies that I would be analysing their interviews after which we would regroup as a collective so that I could present my findings and receive their feedback - this to ensure that I had not misinterpreted their narratives and to embed them in the research product. My methodological concern in the transcription process after the completion of the interviews was imbricated in the ethics of safety and non-harm. As aforementioned, the first interview with each of the participants was done without any recordings and with making notes briefly throughout and more fuller field notes after the interviews. In these initial interviews I established whether I could record the subsequent ones, to which all the women agreed. Because my fieldwork consisted mainly of interviews and hence it being my main source of research and content, it was important that this was reliable for later on and not subject to the uncertainty of memory. Hence, my analysis was based off the initial interview field notes and the transcriptions of the following recorded interviews. I ensured that I was the only one to have access to this transcribed raw data as well as the recordings themselves and which I electronically password protected. During the process of analysis I printed these transcriptions in their entirety to read over and look for common themes - these printed versions were also a constant point of referral through the writing up process, and after which I made sure to discard of safely. Ethically, this was important as the transcriptions in their raw form consisted of many points of conversation and defining features of the participants themselves which they did not want me to include in the final write-up of this dissertation.

After this, a few weeks had gone by until we met for a Women's Day event in August as part of Love in Action's events for the year assisting and empowering the women belonging to the NGO. After the event I was taken aside by Mary who expressed her dissatisfaction for not having heard from me since our last interview, also relaying that she felt hurt for the radio silence. I expressed my sincerest apologies and clarified whether she understood that we would be meeting again to discuss the research and emerging themes. She expressed that she did and laughingly then responded that she just missed me. Despite having been transparent throughout

and forging a space of mutuality and empathy, I made the error of disregarding the emotional relations and connections I had made with some of the participants and how this would manifest as a disconnection of a relationship after the end of fieldwork, as depicted by Mary's feelings of missing our conversations. Our dialogues seem to have surpassed the bounds of formality, into friendly and intimate conversations of meaningful and relatable experiences. I made sure thereafter to apologise to and clarify the process with the ladies, and I attended a few church services as many of them had suggested. This was my attempt to respectfully reciprocate (Finkelstein, 2008) with something they had all requested in the interviews (attending a service) as something that would be important to them despite me not belonging to their church. This evidences the creation of a particular space created between myself and the participants and which we embedded ourselves, and after the seeming disconnection or end of this temporally located and finite *habitus* a disjuncture was felt, pointing to the messiness of the ethics of methods.

After doing my fieldwork, the intial analysis and discerning several common themes, it was important to begin locating this within existing academic literature from which I could both draw and to which this new information could serve to add to. The next chapter locates this paper within existing frameworks of loss and spirituality and also elucidates further the usefulness of habitus as a theoretical basis for this paper.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Abstract

Theoretically outlined below are the impact of material or personal loss (also understood as trauma or grief); conceptualisations of God and the way in which these imaginings happen; and the the impact of spirituality as a tool for social connection. Each of these themes speaks to the research question in terms of how people move on from loss, and serves to locate this question within current research.

Drawing on the common underlying narratives of my five participants, three themes are evident throughout and provide a framework for analysis and a locus for situating my research within a broader frame of literature. Each of the ladies I worked with have all experienced a definitive moment of loss in their lives - a partner, job, or a disconnect from their children. I am choosing to situate or define this as a material or earthly loss - in comparison with their formulations of the emphasis on the extra-real or spiritual in their lives. This spirituality then, encompassing religious belief, faith, and enactments of it, has been reinvigorated and reconceptualised by the women (that is, their faith is cemented and confirmed through a conscious, agentive and creative effort) particularly after these situations of earthly loss. Finally, this reimagined spirituality is articulated or can be understood as providing continuity, meaning and connection with past histories and current relationships. Respectively then, this dissertation looks at disconnection or loss, creative reimaginings of god, and continuity and connection through this. While the ways in which this occurs (ethnographically and conceptually) will be explored in the forthcoming analysis, I will be situating my research within existing academic literature on these three themes, and analysing the effectiveness of it. Additionally, I am choosing to utilise Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* as my conceptual and theoretical framework. The analytical efficacy will be unpacked a bit now and in relation to the current literature.

Habitus

Bourdieu's (1990) basic premise of the notion of *habitus* is that it is a space produced by and productive of particular systems, conditions or affectations which govern or orientate practical actions and its representations "without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express

mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (53). In other words, this notion of habitus can be understood as a space in which there seemingly might not exist any recognisable grand plan (and so, no explicit way that can be learned to master it), but which nonetheless governs and is mutually governed by particular orientational systems in cooperation with this habitus. This conception as a framework could be beneficial in understanding the ways in which, and the reasons for the participants beliefs about the world. That is, by using a macro framework of habitus to a microscopic looking gaze - a lifehabitus, if you will - beamed onto the ladies' beliefs about the world (spiritual and otherwise) and the constructions and effects of these beliefs, will allow for a resourceful analysis and understanding into how meaning is created within their previously existing individual and social frames of reference. More of Bourdieu's theory will be explored in relation to the existing literature pertinent to the aforementioned themes.

Disconnection and Loss

Loss is defined in various ways throughout academic literature and locating these definitions and its effects would be beneficial in creating a clearer framework of the themes my research speaks to. Firstly and conceptualising habitus in relation to loss through disconnection as a framework, Katschnig-Fasch (2002) states that "the drifting apart of habitus and field manifests itself as social suffering and as the experience of personal failure" (57). The author explains that habitus, as a space that orientates reality in particular way and creates particular expectations or norms of how the world should be, is challenged when people experience things that do not conform to the expectations of the habitus in which they exist. This then results in an "inner conflict" (62) which stems from unrealised or expectations of reality that are unable to be fulfilled, and is a juncture at which meaning is lost. In this light then, disconnection exists at a larger level wherein expectations are at odds with experiences. However, this disjuncture between the norms of the habitus and the actual lived experience of people (particularly negative or difficult experiences) results in people being made aware of the norms or the "conventional discourses of sentiment" (Brison, 1998: 381) which the habitus deems necessary or acceptable and is usually not discernible. To elucidate, Brison (1998) explores the ways in which parents in a Papua New Guinea village deal with the pain of losing a child. The author shows that there exists different

social and gendered expectations of how men and women should display their grief in the public space in order to "maintain a positive sense of identity" (Brison, 1998: 381) - women are expected to berate and grieve hysterically whereas men are meant to employ a form of retributive or reciprocal justice. However, Brison (1998) shows that these social prescriptions of pain are enacted in very different ways than what is communally acceptable when a person is faced with the very real loss of their child dying. Through this process of loss, the parents are made aware of what is expected of them normatively and yet their pain and sentiment causes them to challenge it in seeking a way to cope that is more meaningful for them.

This location of habitus and loss is deeply implicated in the social and can be further understood in relation to Nyamnjoh's (2002) notion of conviviality. He shows that agency is negotiated, located and defined as acceptable or healthy when informed by the others or the community, that is, when it is "domesticated". However, Nyamnjoh states that it is marked as negative behaviour when an individual employs their agency to further actions that are conceptualised as individual greed or solitary pursuits. While the author is not speaking to disconnection through loss, it helps to frame an understanding of disconnection from an individual in relation to larger hegemonic social prescriptions. However. it would be beneficial to bring in a more individual-centered understanding of personal disconnection.

In much the same way that people are prescribed particular ways of allowed emotional expressions, Notermans (2007) states that they are sometimes fully disallowed from doing so or are linguistically incapable of it. In other words, they have have neither the language nor the space to adequately express their pain. The author shows then that a religious pilgrimage allowed for the space in which people who had experienced loss, to articulate their narratives of pain (through religious language) in a ways that were acceptable and taken seriously. However, Notermans (2007) goes on to show that these narratives stayed within the habitus of the pilgrimage. This means that unlike the aforementioned examples, loss was expressed in an enclosed space and did not challenge external ordinances, but was still beneficial on a personal and individual level. This idea of individual healing after experiences of trauma is a particularly Western concept that centres on the particularly psychological notion of a hidden or repressed memory that needs to be addressed or brought to the surface in order for a person to heal

(Littlewood, 2002). In this way a healthy sense of identity is hinged on the notion of addressing certain unhealthy memories. However, the author calls for the benefits of "a more nuanced questioning about personal experience" (Littlewood, 2002:93), and evidences this through ethnographic examples of "traditional" responses to political and social violence as retribution or reciprocal violence in Albania and Kosova in which people did not heal through addressing memories, but enacted healing in varied ways. Similarly, Ross (2001) states that women during the TRC, in recalling their memories of Apartheid experiences, articulated their experiences not just as an enclosed event located finitely in time, but rather the "conditions of life that characterised and shaped" (263) the incident. Similarly, with the idea of traumatic memories as something that needs to be brought to the surface of the mind in order to be told, heard and dealt with, Ross argues for meaning to be looked for in the silences or what was unsaid and the agentive act of why the individual is choosing not to narrate particular things in particular ways.

Framing Spirituality

The above framework of the disconnection that occurs when the *habitus* is at odds with reality points to the ways in which people navigate this. This paper is exploring one of the ways this happens through is through spirituality. This dissertation focusses on the term "spirituality" as opposed to "religion", as it is more useful for the focus of this research. To briefly elucidate, on the one hand it is commonly held that there exists a binary or different placement of the terms along the spectrum of faith and belief in the extra material. Firstly, Hill, *et al.* (2000) explains that religion is often understood as a sphere of life that is easily identifiable either through material institutions such as places of worship, physical enactments of rituals, and belief as evidenced through written scriptures or texts - there is a decidedly material, visible or explicit manifestation of belief. The authors further explain that within this, spirituality is subsumed as one facet of religion and as something that is more individualised, mental, emotional or cognitive - it is seen less as the physical or outward form of belief - but it is held that religion and spirituality often "cooccur" or go hand-in-hand (Hill, *et al.*, 2000).

Conversely, another view is that spirituality is often seen as external to or additional to everyday life (Kaufman, 2014) particularly in reference to its connotations with New Age, Western

eclectic and mystical beliefs and practices. However, the author goes on to argue that particularly with regards to scholarship around Christian forms of spirituality, it should be considered as "the way in which a person experiences the relationship to God, and nurtures and expresses his or her faith with a special emphasis on Christian practice." (Kaufman, 2014: 95). The author goes on to explain a two-pronged framework of the "spirituality of everyday life" (*Ibid.*), which this dissertation draws on. The first part of the approach is to not divorce belief and faith (that is, religious or dogmatic) practices from a person's everyday life; and the second is to delve into how in the domestic or private domains, "faith is expressed in the context of family life" (98), both of which would fall under the understanding of spirituality.

Finally, another important linguistic, historical and contextual factor, more so in the context of Christianity, one of the reasons of the separation of religion and spirituality is through the attempt to step away from religion as something, particularly for people of colour within the Global South, that has historically been imposed through missionary enterprises imbricated in colonialism and subjugation (Butot, 2005). The author explains through their research on First Nation people, that spirituality is a way of reclaiming these religious practices and beliefs without the weighted connotations of the past, while speaking to a belief system that deeply pervades all aspects of everyday life (Butot, 2005), similar to the framework outlined above. Hence, because this paper seeks to represent a nuanced picture of the participants' personal imaginings of God and their relationship with him, in relation to their life experiences, using the term spirituality would allow this. In other words, the term allows for a space of creative potentiality in imagination that will hopefully encompass a meaningful and significant aspect of the participants lives without boxing in their experiences and beliefs to stringent or generalised connotations about Baptist Christianity.

Personal Imaginings of God

It would be beneficial to explore in what ways particularly spirituality is done, specifically as a creative, deeply personal and imaginitive process. In line with the aforementtioned idea of memory, Csordas (1994) shows that reliving and addressing past traumatic memories is not the only way in which healing, particularly in Charismatic religious rituals of healing, occurs, but

rather that it occurs in tandem with an "imagination [of God] as an orientational self process" (153). He argues, similarly to Luhrmann and Morgain (2012), that people in these processes of healing imaginatively envisage God as wholly present in the here and now which orientates and structures their dispositions and makes their processes of healing meaningful. However, he also states that "imagination gives access to a culturally defined spiritual realm" (162) wherein the two (memory and imaginings of God) must exist according to particular norms dictated by religions and is then a source to heal. However, for this to happen, Audi (2008) shows that belief or spirituality must not just stem from an abeyance to doxa, but is rather enacted and felt as rooted, influential or generative and as located within a "cognitive map" (89). This is beneficial in understanding why people react to particular situations of disconnection by solidifying or turning to spirituality. Their *habitus* is cognitively at odds with their experienced reality and so a cognitive reimagining to fit these transformed and difficult situations occurs. One of the ways in which this occurs, as Harding (1986) shows, is the act of witnessing in Baptist faiths which reconstitutes its listeners through hearing. In other words, hearing particular resonant narratives, and envisaging the Holy Spirit as present and real, invokes imagination and eventually transformation and "recreate[s] the "listener's' inner speech" (174). Similarly and in understanding why this is important, Fehler (2003) drawing on Bhaktin, states that people order and locate themselves dialogically through speech acts. However when this is met by cognitive dissonances (when reality is at odds with ways in which the world is meant to be, especially according to faith), faith is challenged and a "rhetoric of reconciliation" (107) needs to happens. This means that a person reconceptualises their faith, in dialogue with God, to meet a new and changed reality. God then is "reconfigured" as believers enact a form of "self defense" (111) wherein God is reimagined in a newer, fuller, more characteristic way. It is a dialogic process wherein a response is demanded or necessitated and change must happen.

Besides the cognitive, Shaw (2005) argues that "spirituality evolves predominantly out of the human experience" (350). He also argues that spirituality is hinged on finding a lost love in the here and now by relocating and recreating this love in the beyond. But he states that it is often an "idealized restoration" (356) of the thing that has been lost. This is useful in situating ideas of continuity and connection after disconnection and loss that is remedied through reconceptualisations of God.

Continuity and Connection

Csordas (1997) in his exploration of the Charismatic self explains that the individual is defined by a sense of intimacy and connection to other people of the same denomination. He marks this self in a similar way to how Bourdieu defines *habitus*, as an orientational "indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterised by effort and reflexivity" (64). He states that processes of meaning-making of the charismatic self is the nexus of continuity in that it is enacted through ritual performance in every-day life. In line with this confluence between the individual and the social, May (2011) understands belonging as the connection between the two, in that "our sense of self is constructed in a relational process in our interactions with other people as well as in relation to more abstract notions of collectively held social norms, values and customs" (368). In this vein then, a change in this connection (an effect of which is belonging) such as loss, causes a change in a sense of self - a self that no longer belongs. Alternatively, "our sense of belonging changes over time, partly in responses to changes in our self" (372). While May differs from Csordas in that the author only conceptualises this as social and not spiritual belonging, both locate the importance of an individual as embedded within a larger social *habitu*s which is navigated through connection and challenging. This idea is outlined by Shilling (2004) who states that people do have the capacity to reformulate themselves and challenge existing norms however these are always "*contingent* and *relational*" (482) to whatever is being challenged. In this sense, this could be seen as a continuity of *habitus* despite it being challenged. In this way then, the individual is transformed by the *habitus* only incrementally, suggesting a continuation of dominant frameworks which orientate life.

Alternatively, Watts (2006) shows that a reconnection and continuity occurs, after a sense of depletion of the self in psychoanalytic terms, when this self is reconciled with Jesus through a process of personal transformation. But again, these personal narratives of transformation through Jesus must be located within "broader social narratives" (159) which can serve to enhance a sense of individual identity. Continuity attained through religious narratives and concepts, while intimate and personal, are affected and somewhat constrained by larger frameworks of social norms - that is, the *habitus*.

The above touches on the current body of literature in which the findings of this research are situated, undergirded by the notion of *habitus* as central to it, and to which it aims to extend and contribute. The next chapter will now detail ethnographically the first theme of occurences of disconnection and loss and the ways in which understandings of it are impactful on spirituality.

Chapter Four: Disconnection through Loss

Abstract

The past experiences of loss experienced by the participants were marked by the physical separation of places, people or things wrought from them. Later on in their lives, instability was experienced due to the loss of partners, jobs or relationships. This chapter unpacks the first part of the research question - why and how these losses resulted in feelings of dislocation, disconnection and a loss of meaning which eventually necessitated in it being addressed through a relationship with God.

This chapter aims to show how past experiences moulded and shaped later relationships in how they were enacted and understood - a way to recontextualise past experiences in the current contexts of the participants lives. Specifically, this chapter will explore the ways in which these nuanced past histories are all marked by themes of physical or material separation and were representative of intimate relationships which were tenuous. Secondly, this chapter will look at these past histories of separation in relation to the import of their experiences of more recent trauma or loss in the form of a partner or a job, and the ways in which these two things in the participants' lives are imbricated and meaningful.

Bourdieu (1990) explains that one condition of existence within *habitus* is that often early experiences of human relations are constructed in light of external factors such as domestic economies and familial obligations, which is then the foundation or exemplified premise for understanding and enacting all subsequent experience. Furthermore, this insertion of the past or constant referral to it governs current action according to it but in a way that is naturalised or can be seen as "internal law" (Bourdieu, 1990:54). What this implies then is a continuity of past histories which are embodied in the present and continues to perpetuate itself in a way that is not visible or is unrealised by the actors within *habitus*. This is the first paradigm which undergirds understanding my participants' experiences - their past histories were narrated to me in the interviews in ways that helped the ladies articulate their current positions and beliefs in ways that were meaningful and helped them make sense of their lives, as a referall point or source of contextualisation or understanding. This is similar to how Ross shows that women during the

TRC recalled traumatic past events not in a vacuum or a singular moment in time, but rather "of the conditions of life that characterized and shaped it" (Ross, 2001: 262).

Past Histories

> "When I was growing up with my granny, church every day, every night. [...] And going
> from this beautiful environment into this, how can I say, tsunami. There was no church.
> There was nothing like that. There was just social life." (Carol)[6]

To contextualise, Carol was articulating her childhood experience of having grown up with her loving and religious grandparents and then having to move to her parents who were abusive, emotionally distant and had interests only in being socialites. This move separated Carol from both her siblings and her grandparents with whom she had fostered strong familial bonds, and located her in a space that was vastly different and lacked love and care. Because of this, Carol left her parents home as early as she could. Similarly, Lauren also relayed that her mother, albeit more religious than Carol's parents, was also abusive, stern and rarely displayed love or affection to Lauren, and so she too left home as early as possible. Echoed again in interviews with Nel, she relayed that while she had a "very good childhood" (Nel) in a small town that bred familiarity and communality, she experienced a trauma that forced her to leave her home and seek employment elsewhere. Additionally, throughout her young life Nel experienced abusive marriages wherein her partners never supported her;

> "the abuse was too much. Never give money. He goes from Monday to Monday to work,
> can you believe it, and comes home on a Friday and there's no money?" (Nel)[7].

After her divorces, Nel was forced to leave her children with her mother in her hometown as she was able to be more financially supportive and through this provide an education for her children in the city where she earned more.

These participants' experiences depict a common trajectory of separation or a disconnection from relationships, particularly familial ones, as well as or because of physical or geographic

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[6] Carol. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.
[7] Nel. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.

separation. Carol and Nel both came from relatively stable and happy childhood homes, after which circumstances forced them to leave and attempt to reembed themselves in completely new situations that were often marked by struggle and difficulty. For Nel, one traumatic scenario of gender-based violence in her youth had lasting repercussions and was the crux or turning point at which she had to leave her hometown behind and seek employment elsewhere. Carol, due to circumstances beyond her control also had to relocate to her abusive parents - a domestic sphere jarringly different from the one she had grown up in and again, sought to leave as early as possible. While Lauren did not experience an early stable childhood experience like Lauren and Carol, she however, like them, chose to separate herself when she could but later on experienced an abusive marriage which she eventually left.

What is evident from the participants' experiences and narratives is that firstly, their early lives were marked by social and physical struggle and trauma. It would be beneficial to unpack this further in relation to understanding suffering within *habitus*; which aims to create and reinforce a "common-sense world" (58) through harmonising individual experiences in accordance with and within a collective and according to the internal and naturalised logic of the *habitus*. This results in the creation of people's perceptions of how the world should be (expectations of reality), and at the same time governs how reality actually unfolds (Katschnig-Fasch, 2002). Suffering or struggle manifests then, when collective expectations of reality (habitus) are at odds with the reality faced and experienced by an individual (the field) (Katschnig-Fasch, 2002). The early experiences of Carol and Nel having grown up in stable homes can be seen to have shaped their perceptions of what intimate familial relations, particularly relationships hinged on Christian values, should look like. Lauren, despite growing up with an abusive mother, was also instilled with Christian values. These early experiences, specifically of positive relations often with a strong Christian influence can be seen as the expectation-creating paradigm for how the women began to understand and perceive the world - as one which placed importance on loving and reciprocal family relations.

This became unhinged due to circumstances beyond the participant's' control and they found themselves in situations that lacked what they had previously experienced as normal family relations, despite living with family members - displaying that their expectations were not met by

reality, thereby resulting in an inner conflict (Katschnig-Fasch, 2002). This social suffering particularly caused by the physical and conceptual separations of family and the ideal family model, resulted in Carol, Lauren and Nel making the agentive choice to further remove or separate themselves from what they felt were unhealthy environments. As aforementioned, the *habitus* creates particular expectations of the world particularly through early expectations which then go on to govern future experiences. Hence, the participants had particular normative expectations of the world and future and present experiences stemming from their early lives. Sadly, this was wrought from them and was cognitively at odds with their lives due to circumstances out of their control. However, while they made the conscious and agentive choice to escape those unhealthy situations, they further separated themselves from familiar ways of life, thereby drifting further from past points of meaningful reference. This chapter will now go on to show how the women sought to address this disjuncture in a very material sense.

Stability Lost

One of the ways in which this disjuncture or separation played itself out by the participants was that in order for them to conceptually make up for these past anxieties, struggles and expectations hindered, was to address and deal with it in ways that located or temporally brought it into the present. Similar to Das who states that "the wound inflicted on the self (unlike physical wounds) is not something that simply heals with time" (Das, 2007:101) but is something wherein past violence is in some part constitutive of a subjectivity. Particularly, the instability of the past (of stable and unstable family relationships and the separation from them) is now made up for within manifestations of what are generally construed as stability providing spheres of life such as marriage partners and jobs for the participants.

Within Bourdieu's paradigm, this can be understood through the idea that while the strategies of *habitus* enable actors to cope with ever changing and unpredictable circumstances through the seeming realization or determination of a particular and different future (Bourdieu, 1990), it is illusory because within *habitus* these ends "are determined by the past conditions of production of their principle of production" (Bourdieu, 1990:61). In other words, the participants past experiences coloured or affected the type of relationships they sought and the import of the

meaning they attached to things later in their life, as a way to either address or recover past difficult or stability. The ends of which was to secure a different future or one experientially and emotionally different from the past. However, this endeavour and attribution of meaning consequently converged with the themes of disjuncture and separation experienced in the past, particularly when these repositories of stability in the women's lives were lost.

> *"There was more determination of what I was going to do. I wasn't going to be like that. I was going to go another way. As young as I was, I wasn't gonna have a husband that was gonna drink."* (Carol)[8]

Carol, Lauren and Nel all stated that they eventually reached phases in their later lives where they were deeply emotionally invested and in love with their partners, particularly due to the fact that their partners provided domestic spaces and emotional experiences that were vastly different from their previous negative life experiences, as Carol's quote shows. The ladies made concerted and agentive decisions to be with partners that provided them with both emotional and financial stability. For example, Nel married an aged man who provided for her materially:

> *"And the lord must show him the right woman who needs it. And you know, I never had a house of my own. And because he knows this. So this is where my abuse end."* (Nel)[9]

For these participants, their partners (as loving and supportive men) were a way for the women to address their past experiences of unhinged family relations, instability and abuse. While the lasting or enduring strategy of habitus is evident in that the past experiences of Carol, Laren and Nel's coloured their future choices, they were not wholly victim to nor did they lack control over their lives. In other words, they made conscious and discerning choices in cultivating intimate relations in ways that they desired as a way of reclaiming their past which lacked healthy intimate familial relationships.

Unfortunately, these repositories of stability and love for the participants were marred by the loss of their partners. Carol and Lauren both tearfully relayed how they had lost their husbands due to an ongoing struggle with dementia and a sudden heart attack, respectively. Nel on the other hand

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[8] Carol. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.
[9] Nel. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.

had been somewhat more emotionally prepared for her aged husband's death after a short marriage and battle with cancer. All three participants however noted that this was not just a solitary struggle which they had to overcome, but was rather part of a myriad of resultant problems relating to financial difficulty, and strained relationships with their children and other family members:

> *"I was also struck with so many adversities because of his illness. That my children turned against me, I didn't get any help. It was a terrible journey of heartache and rejection."* (Carol)[10]

As a journey, as Carol describes, and not something static in time, the implications of this loss will be discussed in the next chapter, however, it would be expedient to provide a comparative basis in relation to Mary and Clarise who have different life experiences but similar thematic and cognitive consequences.

> *"He came with the police here, to fetch the bakkie's tires. And I said okay, they can take it, but my husband is not getting out of his bakkie, and he will not say one word to me."* (Mary)[11]

Mary and Clarise did not experience early abuse like the other participants however they did have their sense of stability wrought from them in different forms of loss. During the time of my fieldwork, Mary was experiencing a difficult and painful divorce after a lengthy marriage to a man who was abusive, jealous and manipulative. The deterioration of their relationship resulted in major physical strain on Mary's health and was detrimental to her relationship with her children. As her quote shows above, Mary did not just experience the loss of one relationship because of her divorce, but it had traumatic and offshooting effects to the point that small financial contestations that were blown out of proportion. Mary experienced a double loss in terms of her health, marriage, particularly the financial strain this caused, and her relationships with her children. On the other hand Clarise, who had ambitiously worked hard to build up her career reached a point where she was spending her money too recklessly and was eventually driven to alcoholism due to the stresses of her financial situation. Clarise quit her job in order to work on her sobriety and be present for her family, and so while her loss is not conceptualised in

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[10] Carol. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.
[11] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.

the same way that the other participants had little to no choice as their loss experienced was beyond their control, it still marked a major transformation in the lifestyle of Clarise and her family as a significant form of income sustained by her former job was lost.

Each of the participants experienced some form of material loss which did not exist in an enclosed moment in time, but rather had consequent effects which bled out into many other spheres of the women's lives, and is representative of interrupted or halted expectations particularly of an ideal future (Ross, 2001). These losses and their cumulative effects once again marked a separation or a disjuncture for the women and the lives they had become accustomed to. This cognitive and physical shift can be said to distinguish a loss in meaning or a disconnect in cognitive understandings of reality and the expectation of reality, the result of which is that the participants experienced becoming temporarily disembedded from their social, cognitive, emotional and material ways of being in the world. The next chapter will display how the ladies aim to address this loss in meaning and make sense of their situations through their spiritual beliefs, directly addressing notions of materiality.

Chapter Five: Spirituality Conceptualised

Abstract

This chapter details the ways in which spirituality is used to address past experiences of loss and disconnection, as something meaningful especially after having the meaning in their lives wrought from them. Particularly, to address the material nature of their loss – wealth and materiality is associated with inherent evil or unreliable; and conversely God as meaningful, trustworthy, and stable.

This chapter will explore how loss is understood and made meaningful through the lens of spirituality, which is central and fundamental to the participants' narratives and current existence, particularly as something that assists the women make sense of and make meaningful a struggle stemming from "a tension between reality and desire" (Mattis, 2002:312). Spirituality and conceptualisations of God, it will be shown, is the reconciliatory meeting point between the two ends of this tension - it helps the women explain their realities in line with their desires within the framework of *habitus*.

> *"I struggle with that sometimes. But I think you grow from it."* (Carol)[12]

Suffering, understood here in terms of the loss the participant's faced in conjunction with their troubled past histories, is inherently unsettling and dislocating, albeit temporarily as will be shown in the ways the women address this dislocation. The participants were cognitively and materially uprooted from accustomed ways of life wherein meaning and understandings of reality were forcefully transformed to address changed contexts. In situations of struggle, both emotional and otherwise, which are seemingly logically incomprehensible (that is, when expectations deemed by the *habitus* are not met), "individuals may reflect on the tacit underpinnings of discourses of sentiment in their culture [and] this reflection can lead to creative revision" (Brison, 1998:381; Shilling, 2004). This creative and challenging revision occurred in the form of a reimagined and renewed form of spirituality and faith for the participants. Particularly, a change in the sense of creative reimaginings of God.

The Devil is in the Material

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[12] Carol. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.

The aforementioned losses experienced by the women were a catalyst for losses in meaning. These losses were experienced as particularly materially impactful - such as the participants' losing their embodiment of stability in the form of the death of intimate human relationships, as well as the consequent financial instability caused. The ladies explain and understand these losses through the same lens of materiality but within a framework of spirituality - this shows that they aim to address the loss of meaning through spiritual (that is, symbolically or cognitively meaningful) narratives which at the same time still addresses their material realities - it is a reconstitution of the personal field and *habitus* formerly disconnected through struggle. This is done through creative re imaginings of God, particularly however it is important to note, of God located within a larger Baptist Christian framework relative to values oppositional and negative to God. After the women had discussed their early life experiences and familial setups in the initial interviews, the current foundational importance of God in their lives was evident. Because of this, and to mediate the emotional toll that came with their narratives of abuse and struggle, I sought to ask questions focussed on unpacking how and where the participants' located their difficulties within their spiritual frames of reference. For example, Mary articulated that suffering *"comes from the devil, and everything bad. And God allows things to happen for us to grow."* (Mary)[13]. On the other hand, Lauren states: *"I think sometimes God speaks to us through our illnesses to see whether we will change our lifestyle."* (Lauren)[14]. While the attribution of strife for Mary and Lauren is located in different sources or is seen as caused by either Satan or God, the underlying message of transformation and growth is the same. It is important to note that while Mary attributes bad things to the devil, God is not wholly invisible in the process, as he allows these things to happen. Ultimately then, growth and change stems from the recognition that it is deemed necessary, given or allowed for by God.

Intrinsic to these causal spiritual understandings of material realities is just that, it is deeply rooted in the material, specifically of particular conceptions of finances and money.

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[13] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.
[14] Lauren. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.

> *"It comes with struggle, your days aren't easy. The devil will always try and focus you on something else. Like I don't have money, I'm focussing on money [...] and money will become my idol."* (Mary)[15]

Mary acknowledges again the role of the devil in difficult circumstances describing that particularly in those times of emotional vulnerability one is more susceptible to the devil's temptation of worldly things. Furthermore, if one allows themselves to give in to the temptation from the devil, one would become too materially-focussed which is inherently bad, as Clarise elucidates:

> *"Money is not everything, I knew that all my life, money is not everything, money don't give back."* (Clarise)[16]

The negative effects of materiality are further explained by Lauren, speaking anecdotally about a young career-driven relative who had recently experienced the loss of a parent with whom he was very close:

> *"Now he's clinging to that car so much. He's got three cars, I mean a single person, a single guy. I think that's so wrong. You can't hold on to things like that."* (Lauren)[17]

Too single-minded a focus on materiality is construed as unhealthy for two reasons; firstly, it is non-reciprocal in that while you can gain and earn it, it does not provide for you outside of financial stability. This points to a non-holistic idea of the world - materiality is just one aspect of existence and focusing on just that is a fleeting, unhealthy and meaningfully unfulfilling way of being in the world. Secondly, Lauren's quote speaks the abundance of materiality which is construed as too much - an attachment to material things when there is no practical need for them is not right. This focus on the financial can be viewed in light of the fact that their losses went hand in hand with losing materially and financially. This conceptualisation of non-reciprocal attachments from the devil is perhaps one way of explaining their experiences of material loss.

Another aspect within this paradigm of experienced loss accounted for through conceptions of materiality as bad, is that of personal responsibility and can provide further elucidation for these particular articulations from the ladies. Speaking about her husband's abusive behaviour, Mary explains that while it is in part from Satan, there is redemptive and transformative hope for her

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[15] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.
[16] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.
[17] Lauren. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

husband but *"he needs to come to that place, that place that he needs Jesus."* (Mary)[18]. Similarly, in explaining both the reasons for the abuse she endured as well how she coped with it, Nel states:

> *"I never had the urge to go down. Because I make the wrong choices so I have to accept and I have to go to God and ask God to forgive me."* (Nel)[19]

Both women speak to the idea of responsibility, either to explain how change can happen (through God), or the reasons why something occurred - there is an ownership, being accountable for and holding yourself responsible for wrong decisions before a situation can change for the better. Similarly, Carol links this idea of accountability or non accountability to an attachment to materiality which fundamentally means a non-attachment to God, again with a retrospective cognisance of past wrong actions:

> *"You get married and you grow away from God because now you've got your own [...] It becomes a way of life. You forget."* (Carol)[20]

Clarise attributes her susceptibility to alcoholism to the idea that you *"allow Satan to tell you God is not enough for you."* (Clarise)[21], and hence she allowed herself to be affected by Satan and therefore allayed the stresses of her job with alcohol, and in the same breath was articulating the reasons for the eventual loss of her job.

May (2011) speaks to the idea of the material or embodied embeddedness of belonging within *habitus,* in that a change in the former (material circumstances) often results in a change in the sense of self, particularly in relation to a self that belongs and which is deeply imbricated in aspects of social spheres and relations. In other words, a subject cultivates a sense of belonging based on social spheres in which material and grounded aspects of life such as homes exist. The losses experienced by the participants' caused a disruption in their material spheres of belonging - either with partners or in secure jobs - both of which allowed material stability (or, belonging). Additionally, these losses, in the form of life partners can be seen as imbricating notions of shared responsibility - the women were not alone in their day to day lives and decision making processes and they relied and depended on their partners. In the case of Clarise, while she may

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[18] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.
[19] Nel. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. June 2015.
[20] Carol. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.
[21] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.

have been solely independent in her career, her alcoholism caused by the stresses of her job, can be seen as a space in which she was able to let her guard down and drown out her responsibility. Hence, when she left her job and was forced to face sobriety, this sense of dependence was lost. Hence, taking responsibility within spiritual frameworks in which particular ideas of materiality are implicated, results in the recreation of belonging.

Negative occurrences in the participants' lives such as illness, death and loss are causally attributed to the devil, in conjunction with the idea that the devil causes one to focus on or become attached to worldly things in an unhealthy way of copiousness that surpasses basic and practical need. Hence, loss is caused by the devil but also by one's own inclinations or proclivities for materiality, if allowed to happen. The women then, in taking responsibility for their past wrongdoings as well as their susceptibility to temptation is a way to account for a current lack of materiality, although conceptualised here as unhealthy - and so this loss and lack is from God as an opportunity for personal growth and change. The self-accountability as well as this cognitive system of valuation of the material by the participants, within their spiritual frameworks, can be seen as "symbolic capital is this denied capital, recognised as legitimate [...] (recognition, acknowledgement, in the sense of gratitude aroused by benefits can be one of the foundations of this recognition) which, along with religious capital, is perhaps the only possible form of accumulation where economic capital is not recognised." (Bourdieu, 1990:118). In other words, the material losses experienced are filled up with forms of symbolic capital in terms of the participants' spirituality.

Imagining God

The symbolic capital of God conceptualised is antithetical to the above ideas of the devil and materiality. Before exploring the implications of God relative to this and in this the values attributed to him, it would be expedient to understand the way in which it is done. That is through a cognitive, emotive and perceptive imagining of both God and God's values which is important to understand, specifically in relation to the participants negotiating (albeit unintentionally) a habitus in which expectation and reality were previously at odds. In other words, the manner in which God is creatively and cognitively imagined is another step in the

process of accounting for the previous loss endured in a *habitus* at odds with the participants' personal fields.

Common to all the participants' narratives of God particularly of their reasons for believing so resolutely, was an articulation, somewhat difficult to put into words, but descriptive of a positive feeling. The participants found themselves inherently trusting this feeling given the emotional and imaginative manifestations it garnered. Their beliefs were validated by the personal and embodied responses of the self it made manifest. For example Mary explains the vivid cognitive imagery she experiences of God:

> *"We believe in the unseen rather than what we see in the world. Because what we see in the world is in this world. Like I see you, like I see this table. I can't see Jesus. But if I believe and trust and believe that Jesus is going to rise up and come back again. This is what the Bible says. We must believe. And many times I imagine him standing in front of me. Not see him, but I could imagine him standing there. There was like, a light was just shining in. He's standing in front of you. He's got everything you need."* (Mary)[22]

Csordas (1994) argues that in people dealing with past traumas, "the elaboration of imagination as a capacity of the sacred self lifts the psychocultural veil of silence" (149) that renders the trauma personal memory. This quote particularly alludes to the material aspect of the loss Mary and the other participants experienced - the focus of belief is not of this world because things of this world are inherently unpredictable, unreliable and therefore unstable. Hence, the imagining of God is fundamentally the imagining of something opposite to their experience of loss (and all that it represents) and therefore inherently trustworthy. Furthermore, this cognitive or mental depiction of God can be seen as a way of dealing with trauma otherwise difficult to articulate, and is hence made meaningful through the participants ability to narrate it and is "an orientational self process" (Csordas, 1994:153) but within "a culturally defined spiritual realm" (164). In other words it is imagination with already existing frameworks of imagination - evidencing the import of habitus is constructing and governing the lifeworlds of subjects.

Further encapsulating the restitching of a *habitus* unsettled through loss is the notion that through imagination the boundaries between the self and the other (particularly the spiritual other of God)

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[22] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

is blurred through prayer which cultivates a heightened sensory experience and this is experienced as (materially) real (Luhrmann and Morgain, 2012). Furthermore, Csordas (1994) also argues that this duality is deconstructed because a traumatic memory is reconstructed as part of this process - it encapsulates a past material reality and a cognitive coming to terms with it. When "allowed" (as the participants articulate) to experience god - through the notion of being saved and allowing oneself to be saved - allows God in and so he is experienced as real and material realities are explained and made meaningful or sensible. For example:

> *"If you allow the spirit to work in you, it's the most amazing, it's so exciting. I'm very emotional and I cry. [...] I don't think you can experience joy and happiness if you don't know Christ."* (Clarise)[23]

Another aspect fundamental to spiritual belief is that of powerful emotions:

> *"I feel it, this morning when I walked out here, I felt strong coz I know that he is with me."* (Mary)[24]

Similarly:

> *"It's like this warm feeling that is almost like you are in love. When you are in love with someone, and to me it's amazing hey, because we talk about love but you can't see it. And people say you talk about God, where is your God. It's the same thing. We saying we're happy, but show me happiness. You can't."* (Clarise)[25]

These strong emotive responses and ways of conceptualising God is depictive of several things: firstly, that "only in the imaginary experience [...], which neutralizes the sense of social realities, does the social world take the form of a universe of possibles equally possible for any possible subject." (Bourdieu, 1990:64); secondly, that "faith tends to eliminate or diminish fear and other negative emotions" (Audi, 2008:98); and lastly that faith can be seen as a "reparative process" (Shaw, 2005:360) after instances of loss.

This means, and evidenced by the ladies experiences and beliefs is that particular personal imaginings of God or spirituality stems responsively and imaginatively from everyday experiences of loss (and hence is a deeply emotional process, imbricating the sensory and

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[23] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.
[24] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.
[25] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.

cognitive), that is, things that are no longer materially available, as symbolic representations of what has been lost. Furthermore, this responsive nature to the loss experienced reopens the social world as a realm of possibles (as Bourdieu states) in opposition to a past reality experienced of expectations hindered - therefore the women can be seen as acting through a process of habitus adaptation. This reopening of the social leads to the next chapter which explores how these spiritual conceptualisations reembed the participants socially.

Chapter Six: Reconnecting through God

Abstract

This section addresses the question of – what are the effects and results of the moving on and dealing with experiences of loss through a relationship with God? Three fundamental qualities of God – redemption, presence and loving – play a part in reconstituting how the participants understand themselves and their relationships. This renewed understanding serves to reembed, reconnect and relocate the participants in social spheres and social relations which have previously always been seen as unreliable, unpredictable and unstable.

Evident so far are the ways in which the participants', particularly from their experiences of loss, made manifest a spiritual framework which addresses these life experiences and helps make them sensible. Additionally, the importance of the embodied ways in which the participants imagine God is shown to be significant in that it assists them in reconstituting their expectations with reality - as a bridge is formed between the two through a very experiential individual belief in God. This chapter then will show what these experienced beliefs of God actually mean. That is, what the attributes are of God and godly values that are most important for the participants in their spiritual frames of reference. And secondly, this chapter will show that these values of God relocates or reconstitutes the participants within the social spheres and material realities from which they had formerly become disembedded due to their losses. Watts (2006) shows that for the charismatic Christian self, "Jesus' approach to personal transformation seems to begin by encouraging people to attend to the Self (the whole person that they can become) and to reconnect with it" (155) but this is "often embedded in broader social narratives" (159). Drawing on this, this chapter will show how these attributes of Jesus or God encourages personal transformation for the participants but in relation to their external realities and embedded within social relations and communal networks of their lives.

In other words, the values and the significance of them in the participants' lives can be seen as specifically addressing their past and current social realities, and through this helps the women reconnect with other people by providing new frames of reference (that is, spiritual ones) which change the way the participants now view and understand relationships. These attributes of God transform understandings of themselves, of the world and hence understandings of social

relations are changed and women are able to be reembedded. This chapter will be framed within three main attributes of God which provide insight into both their relevance to the participants' past experience and current social contexts; that of presence, redemption and love.

A Present God

All the participants had grown up in Christian homes which had instilled many values in their lives, however it was only through the Baptist church and beliefs that they have a relationship with God that is truly beneficial for them. This is because the denominations that they had been brought up in, such as Anglican or Catholic were highly ritualised and procedural which, particularly in retrospect in their adult lives, they deemed prevented them from having an unmediated, direct, meaningful and personal relationship with God:

> *"I knew it by heart from Sunday school but it never meant anything. It was just the recitation."* (Clarise)[26]

Here Clarise relays how she would learn scriptures and recite them in her young life in church but that it was just rote recitations of words that were not impactful and did not resonate with her deeply. This ritualised way of belief was seen as a hindrance to really understanding the power and impact of God, able to be had through a more recent and personal cultivation of a relationship with him.

The way in which this is cultivated varies for the participants but generally they all understand that acknowledging that the Holy Spirit[27] as present within them, through regular prayer, and through understanding the Scripture and the word is how this is done.

> *"But the spirit living within you, the Holy Spirit within you, will help you overcome. If you pray. That's why it's so important to pray everyday. If you do, he will strengthen you, he will show you."* (Clarise)[28]

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[26] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.

[27] The participants all interchanged their usage of the terms for "God", from anything between "My Rock", "my Strength", "my Father", "God", "Christ", "the Spirit" and so on. The usage of these terms was not context or content specific except when the Holy Spirit was explained as being within the women as a form of guidance. God was explained by all the participants as a tripartite (of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) but essentially as the same divine presence.

[28] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.

While Clarise posits the importance of praying everyday, Lauren states that while praying is a part of her daily life, she gains a deeper understanding through talking about the Scripture:

> *"I like to discuss the Word. Like my friends will phone, what you think of Sunday's service? We don't discuss people, that's our conversation."* (Lauren)[29]

This personal understanding of the presence of the Holy Spirit, deepened through prayer and discussion points to both individual efforts as well as the importance of inhabiting social structures of similarity and familiarity with others that breeds this particular type of spirituality.

Harding (1986) explains that the guidance of the Holy Spirit occurs through acknowledging its intrinsic and fundamental presence in believers as it serves to "remodel his listeners' inner speech" (Harding, 1986:174). In other words, the author explains that the first step to this acknowledgement often happens in a dialogic process of hearing other people (a pastor or the congregation) talk about God and the Holy Spirit, sometimes through the act of witnessing (Harding, 1986). The participants' sense of spiritual self is changed by others and is therefore is located in larger shared social and spiritual narratives. Csordas (1997) notes that this is a definitive feature within Charismatic denominations of Christianity, wherein "the Charismatic sacred self is [...] in relation to other sacred selves" (65). This is considered in relation to the fact that many Charismatics having been raised in ritualised Christian denominations (such as Anglican and Catholic like the participants were), the element of spontaneity is important as it breeds "interpersonal interaction" (66). This shows that the ladies having come from highly ritualised faiths saw this as a hindrance to a possible cultivation of a meaningful relationship with God, which was achieved later on in life. One of the fundamental attributes of God, posited by the women and which was learnt through their belonging to and participating in the Baptist church, is that of the fundamental presence of God in their everyday lives and within them in the form of the Holy Spirit. This value is learnt, acquired, understood as integral, and continually validated (through conversation) through others in the same spaces and practices and embodying the same beliefs, and is especially important as it was lacking in their earlier lives (often phases of their lives which were abusive, traumatic and marked by imbalance). Hence, it can be seen that this value of God as present through the Holy Spirit is one of the ways in which the

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[29] Lauren. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

participants are able to reembed themselves in social networks of commonality and relatability especially after having been disembedded due to their previous experiences of loss.

While one element of this present nature of God cultivates sociality, conversely it also speaks to a solace found in God that is not allowed for in social circumstances. For instance:

> *"Even if i don't feel like talking to anybody, I can go in my room, close my door and speak to God. Because God is my anchor. Nobody on this earth is going to help me [...] he's always making a way for me."* (Lauren)[30]

Similarly, speaking of a tumultuous relationship with her daughter:

> *"I'm still going to persevere and I'm going to break her. I'm going to show her that she won't be able to turn her back all the time. Because I put it all in God's hands. And I say if I go with thee and I come to thee, be with me Lord. Let me just overlook whatever is going to happen. Because it is tough."* (Carol)[31]

Both Lauren and Carol's quotes depict that there is a level of responsibility given to God and comfort drawn from this, especially when people and human relationships prove unreliable or unwanted. While this can in part be attributed to personal temperament (in Lauren's case for example, she is a self-defined introvert by nature and sometimes steers clear from people as it can be tiresome), this mainly stems from their firm faith in the constant presence of God in their lives. The notion of passed responsibility as well as the reluctance of faith in people, can be unpacked a bit more in relation to the integral redemptive trait of God and particularly in relation to notions of reciprocity.

A Redemptive God

Of equal importance to the participants is the redemptive[32] quality of God as well as the importance of personal salvation in this, both of which can be understood in light of responsibility and reciprocity. Speaking of her past to explain the process of salvation and thereafter redemption:

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[30] Lauren. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

[31] Carol. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

[32] Redemption is understood as the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for the sins of people, which the participants articulate in conjunction with their personal salvation (that is, being saved because of and through the Baptist church), God's second coming or resurrection and, meeting him in the afterlife.

"Even though I was Christian, I was never saved and I wasn't close to God. That is when you repent of your sins and you tell God I am going to give my life to you." (Clarise)[33]

Mandatory and fundamental to the Baptist faith is salvation, wherein as Clarise's quote shows, a person confesses their past wrongdoings and commits themselves fully to God (belief in him and living their lives for him). Through this act of salvation there is a both an explicit show of responsibility through admitting and coming clean of past sins, and at the same time a sharing or passing on of responsibility through committing to the will of God. Csordas (1997) states that "the existential meaning of having the intimately personal Lord do the work must then be understood in terms of how the themes of intimacy and control, even of one's ability to act, are integrated among the [...] aspects of a pragmatically orchestrated Charismatic habitus." (73). For example, one participant explains how she came to envisage God in this particular way; *"I only learnt with the teaching of the Baptist church, how God really wants you to live your life. and when Jesus comes we will arise with him."* (Mary)[34]. In other words, this responsibility and relationship with God operates within a larger paradigm or habitus of the Baptist church in particular) in which the women exist and is relative to their life experiences - the women can be seen as constructing new ways of being in the world through the dictates of a larger social order (that of the church), hence indicative of a reconnection of the individual to the the social through common narratives. Furthermore, understanding how this particular enactment of spiritual responsibility is contextually and experientially relevant displays the import of it in relation to how the participants reembed themselves in their respective social spheres, besides that of the church.

The material losses, of partner's, finances or jobs, experienced in the past by the participants, are integral in understanding why the redemptive quality of God is so weighted for them. For example, all the women note the particular material nature of this earthly life when speaking about God's redemption:

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[33] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.
[34] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

Everything we have, yes we work for it, but because of him we are able to have all this. So when I leave this earth it's gonna stay behind. Because the Lord has more in store for us." (Mary)[35]

While explaining what redemption means, in the same breath Mary also referred to the struggles she was experiencing;

"Jesus already went to the cross for all of this that is happening to me. He has paid the price for me already. I'm safe." (Mary)[36]

Evident in this articulation is a confluence in understanding of struggles, materiality or earthly things and the fact that both these factors are tied to God's redemption. Furthermore, God's redemption is seen as a relationship of reciprocity in that as long as the participants have and continue to commit themselves and their struggles to God, they are absolved of sin and rewarded in heaven. For example, in explaining her husband's past selfish behaviour especially with money, and how she helped him change, Clarise realised that *"the more you give, the more God gives you"* (Clarise)[37].

To elucidate, the losses experienced early in the women's lives, as well as some of their current struggles, are marked by their material, human or financial nature, and often occurred before the participants were saved or a part of the Baptist church. These losses can be seen as having been non-reciprocal in that something was taken away from the women who were then left devoid of intimate relationships, finances and stability that they formerly had - with nothing tangible to fill up this open space in their lives, thereby making explicit the fleeting, uncertain and unreliable nature of material or earthly things, as well as human relationships. After being saved and finding social commonality within the Baptist church, the participants place much emphasis in and on the redeeming quality of God, who as an eternal and extra or ultra material entity, God is not fleeting, uncertain or unreliable - there is no chance of loss as experienced previously by the participants. However, this firm faith is only healthy and functioning through a continued spiritual relationship of shared responsibility and reciprocity. This notion of a reciprocal spiritual relationship can be understood in part through Mauss' (1966) framework of gift-giving who states that gifts are often given under the guise of being wholly voluntary, selfless and with no

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[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.

obligation for reciprocity however this is untrue as the gift itself is based on obligation, self-interest is often "first and foremost a pattern of spiritual bonds between things which are to some extent parts of persons" (11).

In light of this, God's redemption and absolving the participants of their sin through their salvation can be seen at face value as divine or spiritual gift albeit one that requires their continued commitment. However, it is also indicative of the fact that the participants are seeking to protect their self-interests through the belief that through this they will be rewarded in heaven and protected now, as Mary articulates aboves, especially given life experiences that had left them at a material and emotional deficit. Furthermore, the attribution of materiality to God locates the material (that is, money, people, jobs) or an abundance of it in the realm of the spiritual, and is thus a "gift from God", further serving as an attempt to cognitively stabilise or make sensible an otherwise unpredictable sphere of life. Additionally, this framework or way of seeing the world is altered from their past understandings, hence allowing them a changed perspective of people's actions (for example, with Clarise making sense of her husband's behaviour) and while they might not place their faith in the social or human relationships (but rather in God), this way of seeing the world allows them to exist and function properly and with purpose in the social - it places the women in a social-spiritual network of like-mindedness, which is further emphasised through the value of love.

A Loving God

In the aforementioned spiritual relationship of reciprocity with God is further undergirded by the value of love which, as part of the participant's spiritual frameworks, is something that is deemed necessary for and by God, and is then the basis for social bonds and human relations. Firstly, some of the participants spoke about the intimate or familial relationships that they have struggled with:

> "So I can only pray for my son's salvation, that's all. And I don't hate him. You know it's just so exciting to think that you don't have to do anything. Ask your heavenly father and he will do anything for you according to His will." (Mary)[38]

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[38] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

"I think love is the strongest emotional feeling. That you can really do so much if you love somebody. You know the illness my husband had, I don't think that if I didn't love him that much I wouldn't have cared for him because it is the illness that separates. and deteriorates. You look at this perfect body and you see that fading, it's not nice." (Carol)[39]

"For years I struggled. But that is where God comes in. He helps you if you ask him. I cannot do with this person, I cannot love her, I'm going to trust in God to help." (Clarise)[40]

Both Carol, Clarise and Mary speak of the difficulties faced with close relationships wherein they were forced to deal with the loss of that relationship either through death and illness or personal grievances, tumult and severed ties. While Mary attributes her lack of hate for her son and Clarise her assistance with love directly with God, Carol speaks more generally of the intimate love she had for her then deteriorating husband. While the source of the love might be different for the ladies, similar to all the participants however is the non-reciprocal nature of those human relationships lost, mediated through this love and only realised in retrospect and articulated through notions of God. This can be understood through Nyamnjoh (2002) who states that, "culture and identification play an important orientational role by providing repertoires and representations for individuals to draw from, in order that they may act in concert with expectations recognised from their groups" (113). Hence, the participants through seeking to make meaning of their experiences of loss and denied intimate relations, are doing this while meditating or working within the socially accepted parameters of their communities and the spiritual frameworks of the Baptist faith - particularly that of the concept of love as fundamental to all interaction and everyday life.

This is further evidenced and extended to relationships outside of familial ones, wherein love fundamentally governs interactions but also speaks to reciprocity, a level of selflessness and ultimately non-judgement:

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[39] Carol. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.
[40] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.

"But the word of God speaks of love. Because it's easy to love my children and my husband but that person [nasty person], you must love them. " (Clarise)[41]

More so in difficult circumstances, she goes on to say that, *"you mustn't only think of yourself. Think where that person comes from."* (Clarise)[42]. This level of empathy or a concerted effort to understand another person's situation ultimately comes from a sense of not judging them which can only occur if you love them, as difficult as it may be. This strong sense of non-judgement was fundamental to Lauren's Christian way of life who believes that these attributes are not made manifest due to the ritualised elements of the faith such as baptism or salvation, but rather that it is a continuous, concerted and everyday process; *"I believe it's your lifestyle. The way you serve God and you trust in him and believe in him"* (Lauren)[43]

If this selfless love governs people's lives, the participants pointed again and similarly to the redemptive relationship with God, that it would also be beneficial in its returns and reciprocity. For example, respectively Nel explained how her marriage allows her to extend her rewards gained from it, while Mary explained how, in the context of her losses, her love for God remained firm and so she was able to reap rewards:

"I'm happy and I have a house and I can give other people. The people who haven't got a place." (Nel)[44]

"But God uses people to help me. Because you know what, my car is still running, I have something to eat [...] It is not money that I ask for, because I know God is my provider." (Mary)[45]

This reciprocity based on a love in God from which non-judgment and selflessness towards others stems, and the rewards gained from it - be it receiving the material necessities required to stay afloat (in the case of Mary), or the sense charitability (in Nel's situation) gained from it, serves to reembed the participants in their social spheres. In other words, the spiritual frameworks, narratives and articulations of the participants have been reformulated from during

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[41] Clarise. Interview. Muizenberg, Cape Town. June 2015.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Lauren. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

[44] Nel. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

[45] Mary. Interview. Grassy Park, Cape Town. July 2015.

their past experiences of struggle. Hence they now see the world through a different lens which allows them to make meaningful sense of their past experiences and their current situations in line with a broader paradigm (of the Baptist faith and church) which allows them to exist and function in social spheres of familiarity. In line with this, one author explicates that "paradoxical as it may seem, individuals maximise their interests best when these are pursued in recognition and respect for conviviality and interconnected with others and in communion with collective interests" (Nyamnjoh, 2002:117-88). At the same time, these reframed understandings of the world, through understanding God as present, redemptive, and loving, helps the women reestablish and reconnect with human relations as they now understand these relations in different ways - mostly as a source from and governed by God, an ultimately stable and trustworthy entity in otherwise unpredictable and unstable lives. This is elucidated;

> *"A given agent's practical relation to the future, which governs his present practice, is defined in the relationship between, on the one hand, his habitus [...], constituted in the course of a particular relationship to a particular universe of probabilities, and on the other hand a certain state of the chances objectively offered to him by the social world."*
>
> (Bourdieu, 1990:64).

It can be seen that the participants therefore occupy an agentive and creative space between a "universe of probabilities" – the surety and reliability offered by God as well as providing meaning and understanding of things that otherwise seem irrational, and the things offered by the social world – relationships and companionship, in order to address their realities.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This research paper has displayed the role of a deeply personal relationship with God has as a meaning-making process in the face of experiences or realities of loss. The impact of this loss is understood through Bourdieu's notion of habitus, understood as an overarching system of governance and maintence, wherein expectations within this system and the reality of actual occurences are at odds. When this occurs there is a loss in meaning or an inability to make sense of the world – that is, the way things should be are not what they are. This was experienced by the participants when they experienced instances of childhood struggles of being physically separated from intimate familial relationships, and later in life when they lost either partners, jobs, or finances – all of which were social norms of functioning forms of stability. The result of this was that the participants then sought to address these disconnects. This was done through the cultivation of their senses of spirituality. This spiritual conceptualisation of the world directly addressed the material nature of their losses in that materiality, wealth, and human or physical relationships are explained in terms of their spiritual understanding of the world. Particularly, an over abundance of wealth or materiality is seen as bad or evil, more so if the source of it is not attributed to God. Conversely, and also addressing the participants' past experiences of dislocation, disconnection and instability – God is seen as eternal and ever-present and hence inherently stable and reliable – unlike things of this world. Other attributes of God besides the importance of his ever-presence, are that of a redemptive quality as well as the importance of God as loving. These ideals further serve to create a sense of stability and dependability for the participants, thereby addressing their past realities and helping them move on from those bad experiences. In addition to this, these qualities of God allow the participants' to reconceptualise people's action and other social relationships in a new light and with a new understanding, this thereby reconnecting the participants in their social spheres by helping them reconnect with others with a level of empathy.

While it is wholly necessary to understand and change the causes of GBV, from this research paper and the conclusions reached, it has been beneficial to understand and unpack the ways in which people who have experienced GBV and other forms of emotional, mental and physical struggles, move on from this. Religion, spirituality and belief in the extra material or

supernatural is often relegated to the realm of the irrational. However, this paper has shown that the cultivation of a relationship with God is in a fact a deeply creative, active and rational act in the preservation of fortitude in the face of difficulty. Spirituality can be seen as providing answers or explanations for expectations not met by reality, but this is done in such a way that it does not dislocate or separate people from these difficult realities. In actuality, from the narratives here, spirituality serves to equip people with the emotional and cognitive tools to reunderstand, relive and hence reembed themselves in their realities. Hence, spirituality can be seen as a meaning-making process that helps people who have experienced deeply unsettling and unhinging instances of struggle and trauma, to continue with and move on with their lives with a sense of solace and purpose.

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